What Cory Aquino, cocaine addicts, and American consumers have in common

The Washington Monthly

NOVEMBER 1987/$3.00

Tom Peters on

MEMO MADNESS

and other maladies of modern organizations

Confessions of a White Racist

Polly Toynbee on

THE RISE AND FALL OF BRITAIN'S NEOLIBERALS

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LETTERS

Race mixing and sports

In "Tilting at Windmills" [September] you described how race relations are not automatically improved through the integration of schools but rather through the closer contacts that are made in teams, clubs, and other small groups. As a social studies teacher and a cross-country and track coach at the High School for the Humanities, the only racially integrated public high school in Manhattan that comes anywhere near reflecting the actual racial make-up of Manhattan, I can assure you that this observation is entirely accurate. In my classes, which are capped at 34 students, I am continually amazed at how few of the students even know each others' names at the end of the courses. It is in the locker rooms, chatting during meets and practices, and perhaps most of all in the joking around, that different kinds of kids really get to know each other.

The sad part is that extra-curricular activities, like the entire educational system in New York City, are treated like dirt. Sports teams get so little money that most of what we spend on uniforms, equipment, and traveling we have to raise ourselves. Parental involvement is also nil. Last year the only public school indoor running facility, the 168th Street Armory, was converted into a shelter for the homeless. The Public School Athletic League is now allowed to use it one afternoon a week. So we practice in the halls of our high school during the winter. During the meets in the armory hundreds of cots are piled to one side, the air reeks of urine, and scary-looking men and women lurk around the facility. Having to take the kids up to this hole for our meets makes me furious and ashamed. Of course the city needs shelters for the homeless, but taking from the poor to give to the poorer is a hell of a solution.

MATTHEW PEARSON
Summit, New Jersey

Foes blast goofs

I found it very interesting that the reason the *Miami Herald* succeeded and the *Miami Tribune* failed was due to superior management of wartime newsprint allocations ["Hot Chain Nixes Wingo, Buscapades—Nabs Pulitzers, Big Bucks," Matthew Cooper, September]. This was quite a feat considering the fact the *Tribune* was bought out by John S. Knight and the plant padlocked in 1937, some four years prior to World War II.

RICHARD McCORMICK
Miami, Florida

Matthew Cooper finds much to commend in the Knight-Ridder chain. But he finds absurd the battery of psychological tests used in hiring staff.

It does not seem to occur to him that the quality of the chain's papers may be due to the success of these tests—and the associated "touchy-feely" training program. The tests seem remarkably well-suited to ensuring that Knight-Ridder will have a staff whose values are consonant with high journalistic standards, and distinctly unfriendly to the bottom-line values of the staffs of other newspaper chains.

W.S. VERPLANCK
Knoxville, Tennessee

Matthew Cooper replies:

Mr. McCormick caught a goof. By printing more news during World War II, Knight's *Miami Herald* wooed readers from the *Miami News*, not the *Miami Tribune* as I said. There's less to Mr. Verplanck's criticism. Well before the company instituted its extensive psychological testing program, Knight had transformed mediocre papers, like the *Herald*, into great ones. Few of the editors and reporters I spoke with identified the tests as a main reason for Knight-Ridder's quality.

Excusium usum

Philip Weiss's expose ["Charming Her Way to the White House," September] afforded me a new perspective on Elizabeth Dole. However, I believe Mr. Weiss needs to brush up on his Latin. When discussing Ms. Dole's flip-flop on consumer issues, he refers to her as ". . .the woman who. . .had warned that the slogan 'caveat emptor' was about to be replaced by 'vendor emptor.' . ." This translates into ". . .the slogan 'let the buyer beware' was about to be replaced by 'the seller is the buyer.' . ." How's that again? Does Mr. Weiss perhaps mean "caveat vendor" ("Let the seller beware")?

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What would Cicero say? "O tempora! O mores!" If you print this, I promise to send a copy to my high school Latin teacher.

HANNAH KLEIN
Wheaton, Maryland

The editor replies:
Mea culpa.

MacArthur's mad dash

In his review of Forrest C. Pogue's *George Marshall: Statesman 1945-1959* ["Marshall Arts," July/August], Evan Thomas blames Marshall, then secretary of defense, for permitting MacArthur to cross the 38th parallel in Korea and attempt to reunify all of Korea. Thomas calls MacArthur's movement into North Korea a "mad dash." However, in point of fact, President Truman had decided to reunify all of Korea, and a United Nations resolution called for the reunification of Korea. MacArthur was merely carrying out presidential as well as U.N. policy. I realize that it is a common misconception that MacArthur invaded North Korea on his own initiative, but this isn't what actually happened.

Thomas misunderstood the circumstances and significance of Marshall's message to MacArthur to "feel unhampered tactically and strategically." This communication did not give MacArthur authority to cross the 38th parallel. That authority had been granted MacArthur in a Joint Chiefs of Staff directive that was issued to agents of the president in the implementation of presidential policy. Since the presence of American soldiers near the Chinese border was provocative to the Chinese, the directive from the JCS stipulated he was to use South Korean and not American troops near the border. However, because of the combat differences of the South Korean units, MacArthur used American units near the Chinese border, and when the JCS questioned this, MacArthur asserted that Marshall's message that he "feel unhampered" gave him the authority.

The ultimate responsibility for seeing to it that MacArthur clear the use of American units rested with Truman. But Truman did not insist Marshall inform MacArthur that he was not to use American troops near the border when Marshall failed to inform him on his own.

JOSEPH FORBES
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Evan Thomas replies:
Yes, MacArthur did have Truman's, Marshall's, and the U.N.'s authorization to invade North Korea. My point is that Marshall knew MacArthur's offensive was extremely risky, yet he failed to stop him. Had Marshall warned President Truman—who was in awe of the old general—the defense secretary could have easily stopped MacArthur's "mad dash." (The U.N. was merely a U.S. rubber stamp, since the USSR was boycotting the Security Council.)

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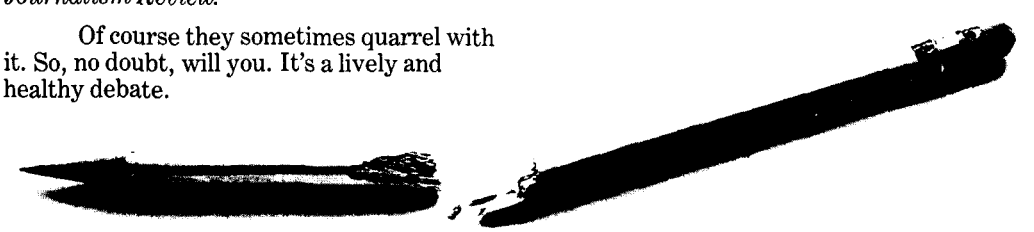

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Holbrooke doesn't waltz

As James Fallows notes in his review ["Manila Fudge," September] Raymond Bonner has written an important work of contemporary history [*Waltzing with a Dictator*]. Because of that importance, we believe it is right and necessary to dispute Mr. Bonner's treatment of Richard Holbrooke.

When we read the book in manuscript, both of us felt it was a fine piece of investigative reporting, and still do. And while we agree that many American policy-makers waltzed with dictators like Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, Dick Holbrooke was not one of them. We write to set the record straight, and not simply because Mr. Holbrooke is our friend.

It is wrong to say that Mr. Holbrooke pandered to Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, or that he failed to give due regard to human rights considerations. The Marcoses did not miss the message when Mr. Holbrooke visited Benigno Aquino in Boston in 1980 after his release from a Philippine jail. And it should be remembered, he did so at a time when the political atmosphere in Washington had moved sharply to the right.

The same holds for his role in the Philippine base negotiations. It is true that he argued against giving priority to human rights, as he also argued against outright priority for security considerations. This strategy of balancing human rights and security interests reflected the policy of President Carter and Secretary of State Vance, no slouches on rights. In our judgment, it was the correct approach. Reasonable people may argue about the nature of the balance, but the realities of the world require that a balance be struck.

LESLIE GELB
New York, New York
ANTHONY LAKE
South Hadley, Massachusetts

Mr. Gelb, deputy editorial page editor of The New York Times, *was director of politico-military affairs in the State Department during the Carter administration. Mr. Lake, a professor at Mount Holyoke College, was director of policy planning in the Carter administration.*

An appalled bookkeeper

Please convey my appreciation to Phillip Longman for "How the Government Cooks the Books" [July/August]. I think I would have followed his explanations of cash and accrual accounting even if I weren't a bookkeeper, yet I also didn't feel I was being guided through Elementary Accounting 101.

I was appalled to learn that the federal government uses cash-flow accounting, and more appalled that I didn't already know about it. I've thought for years that we are stealing from our children, grandchildren, et al., in terms of natural resources. The implication of future liabilities—having a hand in their pockets as well—is staggering, both economically and emotionally. How are our descendants going to feel when they start to realize they've been mortgaged to support our retirement years?

RUTH BRINTON
Seattle, Washington

Red scare and green thumbs

I was pleased you found Jon Drozd's story in *Farm Futures* newsworthy enough that Jeffrey Pasley mentioned it in his September article ["Green Thumbs"]. However I do wish you had followed our coverage of Mr. Drozd. In fact, the sidebar we carried, "How to Make $31,937 in an Afternoon," contained an inaccuracy that we corrected in our June issue. The farmer in the sidebar probably made closer to $4,000, a point which our readers explained in a barrage of letters we received on the subject.

CLAUDIA WATERLOO
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Ms. Waterloo is editor-in-chief of Farm Futures *magazine.*

Jeffrey L. Pasley is a communist. Does that take you by surprise? That statement is about as true as his article.

Mr. Pasley has never had to grow $3.00 corn and only be offered $1.50 for it with nowhere else to sell it. The programs are not perfect but what in this world is. Surely not Mr. Pasley's perception of the American farmer. The programs have "done good"—case in point: the cotton program. Cotton is up 30 cents a pound and usage is now about seven million bales since the marketing programs started last year. Not bad but good.

The only alternative at the present is to eliminate the programs and life as we know it. Not just here in rural America but in the metropolis too. If you don't believe it, let's bankrupt rural America (they're only evil scam-artists anyway, according to Pasley). Then we'll see who this service economy services. I'd want to be a mortician.

SHAWN McCLELLAN
Waynesboro, Georgia

Jeffrey L. Pasley replies:

Mr. McClellan takes an attitude that is all too widespread among American farmers, and in the agriculture establishment. He believes that the farmer's situation is somehow unique and that he is somehow more deserving of our indulgence than other workers and employers. He is absolutely right that I have never grown $3.00 corn and gotten $1.50 for it. However, I have written $300 articles and gotten $150 for them with nowhere else to sell them. Sometimes I have even written articles I thought were worth much more and couldn't find any place to sell them. Unfortunately, there are no federal subsidies for free-lance writers, nor for plenty of other worthwhile pursuits.

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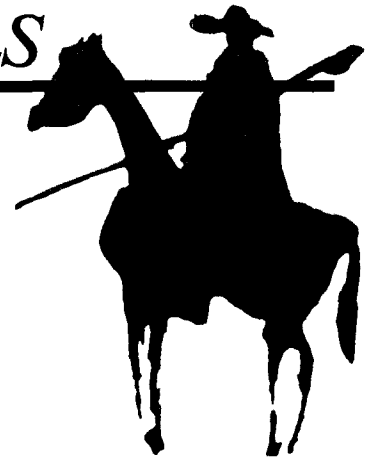
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



There comes a time in every young man's life when he wants to tell Daddy to shut up. In Albert Gore's case, that moment may have arrived when his father, attempting to explain his son's new hawkishness, told *The Washington Post*'s Paul Taylor:

"What you're seeing now is no accident. We've got to get the Dixiecrats [southern conservative voters] back into the Democratic Party, and we're playing damn hard ball. Later in the campaign, after he has won the nomination, people will see the other side of his record come through: his work on the environment, on chemical waste, on standards for infant formula, on the ozone layer. It will be clear he is a very progressive, forward-looking candidate."

Gore Sr. was telling Washington insiders not to worry about Gore Jr.—we've just got to con those rednecks, you understand....

Those TOW antitank missiles that we sold Iran may turn out to be our secret weapon against the Ayatollah. According to a recent study by the General Accounting Office, up to 85 percent of the soldiers using TOWs will be killed after firing a single round.

The down side of this finding is that it also applies to our own troops using the TOW....

In his autobiography Ben Franklin tells this story: "About the year 1734 there arrived among us from Ireland a young Presbyterian creature named Hemphill who delivered with good voice, and apparently extempore, most excellent discourses....One of our

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adversaries, having heard him preach a sermon that was much admired, thought he had somewhere read that sermon before....He found that part in one of the British reviews....This gave many of our party disgust who accordingly abandoned his cause....I stuck by him, however, as I rather approved his giving us good sermons composed by others rather than bad ones of his own manufacture."...

A recent issue of *Working Woman* lists "The 25 Hottest Careers for Women." The top two are "Corporate-identity consultant" and "Special-events marketer."...

I have discovered a reason for the precarious state of the world economy. It is the limousine. I have never seen so many as I did during the recent joint meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington. Each morning hundreds of them picked up the officials, who represented nations throughout the globe, took them to their various meeting places, and then waited all day before returning them to their hotels or embassies at the end of the afternoon. Only that wasn't the end of the limousines. They picked up the officials again to take them to the evening's social events, where more waiting took place before the final trip home for the night. Is it not possible that these officials display the same indifference to wasteful extravagance in their decisions about public expenditures back home?...

Having perused the hundreds of catalogs that arrived in my mail box early this fall, I have selected the perfect Christmas gift: World Class Skipping Stones. "You don't drive anything less than a Rolls Royce," the Early Winter catalog reads, "so why don't you demand the best for your skipping stone?"...

Iowa Democrats have found a new way to finance their county organizations. A county committee will announce that it is holding a barbecue dinner, costing so many dollars per plate, at which a straw poll will be taken. The presidential candidates are so anxious to win these polls that they try to pack the hall with their supporters, sometimes even yielding to the temptation to bring in people whose claim to being Iowans is not above suspicion.

My son Chris, perhaps prejudiced by the fact that he is a volunteer Babbitt worker, wrote a letter describing his arrival at a meeting hall where one of the barbecues was to be held: "The preponderance of maroon Missouri license plates in the lot tips me that Gephardt supporters have arrived in force. Even the Gore Corps has unexpectedly shown up, consisting in this incarnation of about 40 senior citizens from a Memphis retirement village. One of them approaches me and genially asks, 'Ah y'all folks from Ahuwa?' "

Eye Openers

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It may seem crazy to the rest of us, but not to the county committees that get the revenues from all those barbecue dinners....

"You could have knocked me over with a cigarette butt," writes Edward Peeks, a columnist for *The Charleston Gazette*. "I opened the *Gazette* and this new Virginia Slims Ultra Lights ad jumped out at me. That afternoon the Charleston *Daily Mail* ran the same full page ad, portraying a voluptuous model with cigarette in hand and head thrown back with a smile of delicious joy on her face."

What puzzeled Peeks was that the *Gazette* and *Mail* had just outlawed smoking by their employees. Why would they subject the public to the temptation to buy a product they deemed so dangerous to themselves?...

Since the technology is available to produce plastic or ceramic handguns that could not be detected by airport screening devices, there is a movement in Congress to outlaw the guns. Who could oppose it? The National Rifle Association, of course....

Clever lobbyists who want to sneak dubious legislation through Congress know that the secret is to make it so paralyzingly dull that no one will read it. Consider the provision at the bottom of page 674 of H.R. 3, the House version of the Omnibus Trade Bill:

"(3) Funds or commodities made available for use under this section shall be used by the Secretary [of Agriculture] to assist organizations consisting of producers or processors of United States agricultural commodities, in such amounts as determined to represent reasonable expenses incurred by them, in defending countervailing duty actions instituted after January 1, 1986, in foreign countries to offset the benefits of the agricultural programs provided for under the Agricultural Act of 1949 or this Act. In no event may such assistance exceed $500,000 for the defense of any one countervailing duty action."

The great public service performed by this provision is putting $500,000 into the pocket of a law firm. The money, according to Greg Rushford of *Legal Times*, is a fee owed the firm by the National Corn Growers Association, which is not some public body but a group of private citizens. The government could just as well pay the legal fees of the Magazine Publishers Association—or the National Rifle Association....

Did you know that a person convicted of stock fraud can open a new brokerage business and no one will warn his potential customers of his past history? I didn't and thank Stanley Penn of *The Wall Street Journal* for warning me. But what happens to people who didn't happen to see his article and rely on their government to protect them?...

The Boeing 747 takes off from Seattle airport and flies out over the Pacific. When it has reached a point 200 miles from land the radio begins to crackle with conversations between brokers and lawyers. Soon the pilot is replaced by a new pilot. The plane has been bought. The reason such transactions are handled this way, according to Simon Winchester, writing in *Airport* magazine, is that "beyond the 200-mile limit, no American tax—whether state, federal, or municipal—can be levied on any commercial transaction."...

When Caspar Weinberger cancelled the Divad gun in 1985, he ordered that it be replaced with three different systems. Two of the three have now been selected. They show that the Pentagon *can* do the right thing. Last winter they picked the "FOG-M," the very cheap (about $20,000 each) missile developed outside normal procurement channels by a

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Sometimes it's easy to forget how much *The Washington Monthly* depends on its readers. Our Memos of the Month come almost entirely from you. Clippings from your local papers inspire many of the items in Tidbits and Outrages and Tilting at Windmills. Readers help us in countless other ways, calling with tips for stories, giving their friends subscriptions, or just making sure we're on the shelves of their local newsstands, bookstores, and libraries.

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few guys at the Army Missile Command, to be the first of the three. The *Monthly* touted the FOG-M in July/August 1984. We quoted its inventor as saying its success would "depend on whether the Army lets us leave some of the fancy stuff off."

In August they picked the Boeing "Avenger" vehicle for the second part of the new system. The *Monthly* endorsed the Avenger in November 1984. We noted that it was driving the Divad lobbyists crazy (this was when Divad was still alive), because Divad cost $6.8 million each and Avenger cost about $1 million. The great thing about the Avenger is that almost all of the development work was done at Boeing's expense and took about two years as opposed to ten-plus years average for Pentagon-supervised work.

That is the good news. Now for more familiar tidings from the Pentagon. The FOG-M item appeared as a sidebar to Gregg Easterbrook's article, "The Army's $800,000 Model Airplane," about the Aquila remote-piloted drone. The scandal was that both the U.S. and Israel started building drones in 1974. Israel's drones were ready to fly in 1978 at a cost of only $30 million and, by spotting tanks and artillery positions, helped defeat Syria in 1982. By now, the U.S. Army has spent $750 million with nothing to show for it. It says it will finally have the Aquila operational in 1992. The cost then: $2.2 billion....

Just in case you've forgotten how insidious the FBI's COINTELPRO had become in the late sixties, it was recently revealed that in Montgomery County, Maryland, FBI informants in the public schools were keeping track of the political activities of students as young as 14....

We now know another possible reason for Elizabeth Dole's long delay in cracking down on private plane owners. Her husband has been using corporate jets from such companies as General Mills, Warner-Lambert, and Metropolitan Life for his campaign trips. According to *Newsday*'s Susan Page, he satisfies the rules of the Federal Election Commission by paying the equivalent of one first-class airfare. The charter rate the rest of us would have to pay for a private plane would be many times that figure.

Does this not leave Senator Dole obligated to the firms that supply the plane? Indeed, he appears to have already repaid U.S. Tobacco Corp. for the use of its Gulfstream III by supporting the tobacco subsidy program and opposing higher taxes on tobacco products....

I'm disturbed by the stories that some of the Iranian sailors that we captured in the Persian Gulf were returned to Iran even though they wanted to defect. We have done this twice in recent years with Russian sailors. Of course the most shameful of all such episodes was the forced repatriation to the Soviet Union in 1945 of thousands of Russian soldiers who had been liberated from German prisons by us at the end of World War II and who had told us they didn't want to go back....

I hereby present the Kaiser Cup to Eleanor Randolph. The Cup is not some piece of Hohenzollern memorabilia, but an award that I present to *The Washington Post* writer who must explain how a book written by another *Post* writer has not revealed information that should have been published in the newspaper at the time it was uncovered. It honors Robert G. Kaiser because it was his unenviable task to persuade the *Post*'s readers that the amazing revelations of William Greider's *The Education of David Stockman* had all appeared in the *Post* first, which they had not. (Greider was on the *Post* staff while he was writing the book.) Kaiser and Randolph are fortunate they weren't around at the time Woodward and Bernstein's

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The Final Days appeared. They would have had to explain why almost none of its juicy parts had been in the *Post*, although both men were supposed to be working there while they were researching and writing the book.

There is a certain conflict of role in having one *Post* reporter do the apologia about another's book. After all, many of them write books themselves. Kaiser has already done so and Randolph is talented enough that she almost certainly will be asked to do so soon. They have a self-interest in convincing the *Post*'s readers—and publisher Donald Graham, who was especially troubled by the Greider book—that nothing wrong has been done. In the case of *Veil*, one clear wrong was the failure of Woodward in his reporting in the *Post* of the Fadlallah bombing to disclose, as his book later did, that it was part of a CIA-Saudi conspiracy. That was news—important news—that should have been given the *Post*'s readers as soon as he learned it.

The *Post*'s defense on this one is that Woodward didn't discover the Saudi-CIA angle until last July. If this is true, why didn't he report it then? The real reason Woodward gets by with these things, I suspect, is that he is such a great reporter that the *Post* doesn't want to risk angering and possibly losing him by dwelling too much on his derelictions....

The West Germans are not content to fleece us by having us pay about 40 percent of the cost of NATO, which is mainly devoted to protecting them. They also stick us with millions of dollars in fraudulent claims for damages done by American forces on maneuvers. "That is quite possible," acknowledged a military official in the West German embassy to Knight-Ridder's Pete Carey. "We have the saying in Germany, 'The oldest boy gets the farm. The next one gets the maneuver damages.' "...

They Shoot Horses, Don't They? Yes, they do. In fact in Texas they not only shoot the sick and the lame but the perfectly healthy as well. The reason is insurance. Since the decline in oil prices has made it harder for the entrepreneurs of Texas to pay their Neiman-Marcus bills, they have been searching for new economic opportunities. One of their discoveries has been how to make a killing by killing horses. First they inflate the horse's value through phony sales transactions, then they insure it for the inflated amount. Then they get rid of it. The preferred methods other than shooting are electrocution, suffocation, and poisoning....

How is Washington's mayor, Marion Barry, responding to evidence of corruption and ineptitude in his administration? By holding staff meetings on how to generate "positive" publicity. The mayor is definitely not one of my heroes, as most of our readers are aware, but in this respect I fear he is no different from most government officials I have known. You can tell them the place is falling apart and they see it as a public relations problem....

A task force at the City University of New York has proposed, according to *The New York Times*, that students being trained to be teachers should be required to major in the liberal arts and sciences instead of education. This is good news. New York influences the rest of the country, and the education major is one of the principal factors in the substantive weakness of

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American public education....

Tiger mosquitoes? According to Cynthia Lollar of the Cox News Service, they're the latest thing we should be worrying about. They transmit dengue fever and encephalitis and are coming into America in cargoes of used tires shipped from Asia. I would really rather not get dengue fever or encephalitis, so I have a question for the authorities. Why are we importing used tires from anywhere? There must be billions of our own littering the landscape at this very moment....

"A dramatic revision of the Hatch Act, which would free federal workers to run for office, support political parties, and raise money for candidates on their own time is on a fast track in the House," reports Judith Havemann of *The Washington Post*. Let us hope it will be derailed soon. If federal employees want the protected job security provided by the civil service, they should be nonpartisan. If they want to participate in politics, they should be willing to be fired when their party loses. I *would* like to see at least half of them make that choice and would like to see present laws amended to encourage them to do so. It would revitalize the political system to have a goodly number of the bureaucrats who are supposed to serve the people—but too often come too close to behaving like those bored postal clerks in Federal Express commercials—actually be made accountable to the people. But I fear there are few civil servants willing to take such a risk. Instead, those who support the bill want to have their cake and eat it too, to enjoy the rewards of both partisanship and nonpartisanship, to be political but without taking any chance of losing their life tenure....

This month's roundup of news from California: in Orange County, 24 high schools offer surfing courses; the San Jose city council has authorized the purchase of 30 trash cans at $707 each; and in Santa Clara the manager of the municipal golf course may have made as much as $750,000 by pocketing greens fees and using its American Express card to pay for his personal expenses. Suspicion was first aroused when the cash receipts at the golf course skyrocketed after the manager resigned....

There is a new magazine called *Leaders*. Its masthead says: "To receive LEADERS Magazine one must be a leader of a Nation, an International Company, a World Religion, an International Institute of Learning, an International Labor Organization, a Chief Principal Officer, a Major Investor on behalf of Labor or Corporate Pension Funds, a Chief International Officer, a Nobel Laureate, or a leader in Science or the Arts." For those wanting to subscribe, there are lists of areas of employment with boxes to check for the job titles of the would-be subscriber. Under religion, among the boxes to check are Pope, Cardinal, and Archbishop. *Leaders* carries ads for Gerald Genta wrist watches. One called the Minute Repeater is available for $160,000. But if the bingo games aren't bringing in much these days, you can get the Mickey Mouse watch for only $25,000....

For the past three years I have been feeling sorry for myself because of the strain of trying to write a book and put out the *Monthly* at the same time. Last month I found an antidote for my self-pity. It was the obituary of the Rev. Annie M. Woodridge. Soon after moving to Washington in 1954, she turned the basement of her home into a recreation center for children who had no place to play. This developed into a Jobs for Teens program and later into a community center, where, according to *The Washington Post*, she "counseled as many as 200 people a week and her activities ranged from helping people fill out job applications to finding overnight shelter for homeless persons. She distributed surplus food from the Department of Agriculture and she recruited volunteer seamstresses to mend and alter clothing on donated sewing machines." She was also the pastor of a church, preaching twice a week and presiding at weddings and funerals. With so little to do, it's no wonder she also found time to bear and care for six sons and nine daughters....

—*Charles Peters*

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Drawing by Peters Day

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To: Corporate Managers
Re: Bureaucracy

DON'T SEND MEMOS!

by Tom Peters

"I find it mind-boggling. We do not shoot paper at the enemy."

—Admiral Joseph Metcalf, on the 20 tons of paper and file cabinets aboard the Navy's newest frigates. Quoted in Newsweek, *May 1987.*

Moaning about bureaucracy is a time-honored management prerogative. Now, however, bureaucracy is beyond moaning about; it is a block to survival. The campaign against bureaucracy must become a priority of the first order. I cannot provide you with the will to do it. I can simply tell you that it can be done, that it must be done if we are to move faster and liberate people—managers and nonmanagers alike—to perform up to their potential.

Fortunately, there are people and firms that have beaten back bureaucracy's seemingly inevitable encroachment:

►A division general manager in a large high-technology firm raised from $25 to $200 the amount his engineers could spend without getting approval. The accountants screamed. Following imposition of the new standard, spending plummeted 60 percent. He explained: "That wasn't the point, cutting costs. It was to quit treating them like kids. But you know what happened, of course. With the $25 limit, it was 'Let's see how many $24.99s we can tack together without authorization.' It was a time-consuming game—'We can out-Mickey Mouse you, boss.' Now, with the $200, people say, in effect, 'Hey, that's a lot of money I'm responsible for.' They look at it as theirs."

Tom Peters is a frequent contributor to the Monthly. *This article is adapted from his book* Thriving on Chaos: Handbook for a Management Revolution. *Copyright © 1987 by EXCEL/CALIFORNIA LIMITED CORPORATION. Reprinted with the permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.*

►In *The Intuitive Manager*, journalist Roy Rowan reports: "[Ross] Perot claims he operated a memo-less company. Like Napoleon, who reputedly tossed out all written reports from his generals, figuring he'd already heard the important news, Perot prefers to conduct all of his business by personal contact. 'Written reports stifle creativity,' he says."

►*The New York Times* recently reported that antibureaucrat Ken Iverson of Nucor Corporation, a steel manufacturer, maintains an "executive dining room": "[He] has designated as the executive dining room the Chinese restaurant and delicatessen—usually the deli—in the shopping center across the street from Nucor's headquarters in Charlotte, N.C."

►Nordstrom, a $1.9 billion retailer, gets by with a one-sentence policy manual: "Use your best judgment at all times."

Everyone talks about cutting red tape. A few do it. Why not the rest of us? How do you reduce the policy manual to a sentence? Or raise engineers' spending limits, in one step, by a factor of almost ten? Or stop sending memos?

Mars bars

Start with the voluminous rules. Betsy Sanders, vice-president of Nordstrom, acknowledges that the one-line "policy manual" drives Nordstrom's lawyers crazy. So be it, she adds. It liberates Nordstrom employees from an astonishing amount of Mickey Mouse. Sad to say, rule books are referred to only to slow action, defend turf, and assign blame. Have you ever heard of anyone going to a rule book to figure out how to speed things up?

The absence of rules manuals at Nordstrom has been anything but an invitation to chaos. Sanders says the supervisors' chief duty is to coach salespersons on "*exactly* what it means to 'use your own best judgment.' " Hardly a design

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More than 90 percent of the several hundred memos I analyzed were of the "cover your ass" variety—designed only to clear the writer of any kind of blame should anything go awry.

for madness. In fact, the absence of childish rules shifts the employees' focus of innovation from how to evade toilet break rules to precisely where the firm wishes it to be: in pursuit of serving the customer better.

At a Mars, Inc. subsidiary as well, fewer rules have meant less fuss—and more focus on the business task at hand. A labor contract was up for renewal. A rookie management negotiator set an objective about which most of his peers were highly skeptical—to replace the inch-thick document with one of five pages or less. He was successful, and grievances were cut to a trickle. There are simply no nitpicking details—"subparagraph 7.13b.2ii"—for either side to get hot and bothered about. Dayton Power & Light followed a similar path. After a year and a half of negotiations, they reduced the contract from 200 pages to 14, the first page being a statement of shared philosophy. In short order a profound change in attitude ensued, with people working together to confront problems.

Consider Worthington Industries, a steel and plastics manufacturer, which also has no rules manual. No union has been able to organize any of the company's field operations, but Worthington has acquired several unionized companies. Though top management strongly discourages applying pressure to decertify, five of the operations have done so. Worthington senior managers observe that employees have had little problem living without the protection of a union contract. Their supervisors, however, have had a devil of a time adjusting. One executive notes: "You just took away their reason for being. They were there, as they saw it, to administer the contract on management's behalf. They were there to catch guys goofing off. Now, suddenly, no rule book, no time clocks, no scheduled breaks [you take a break when you conveniently can], no locks on the tool-room door, no forms to be signed to check out a tool or a spare part. What's left for them to do? Very little, by the old standards. Some don't make the transition."

Here's how managers could encourage nonbureaucratic behavior: Demand that reports be reduced to, say, three pages or less. Prune the number of reports they receive by 50 to 80 percent in the next 6 to 12 months. Refuse to send memos; use the phone or personal contact instead. After getting a memo from the boss, managers should pop into his or her office with an answer, not retire to an office for three days to write a treatise in response. Send back without comment all "information copies" of memos. (Unfortunately, the conventional wisdom is true. More than 90 percent of several hundred memos I analyzed were of the "cover your ass" variety—designed only to clear the writer of any kind of blame should anything subsequently go awry.)

Also send back, without comment, decision documents that aren't addressed to the right level. One senior political appointee in the Installations and Logistics secretariat of the Department of Defense arrived on the job to find that tiny architectural changes were sent from the field all the way to Washington for approval. He just returned them without comment. People quickly caught on, and the flow stopped.

Cut every procedure manual in half over the next 12 months. And cut it in half again the following year. Finally, urge the lawyers or contract department—none too gently—to experi-

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HARPER'S INDEX

Interest payments on the federal debt that were made to foreigners in 1984 : $19,800,000,000
U.S. foreign aid in 1984 : $15,583,000,000
Hours spent on strike by Italians in 1979 : 192,700,000
In 1984 : 51,000,000
Rank of Italy, Argentina, and Libya in annual per capita pasta consumption : 1, 2, 3
Pounds of pasta the average American ate in 1975 : 6.8
In 1984 : 11
Number of Americans who drink Coca-Cola for breakfast : 965,000
Quarts of ice cream the average Southerner eats each year : 12
The average New Englander : 23
Potholes in the United States : 55,961,000
Cost of having a car blessed at the Daishi Buddhist temple in Kawasaki, Japan : $10.77
Cost of a car wash at Steve's Detailing in New York City : $145
Percentage of American women who said they liked sports cars in 1976 : 39
Who say that today : 56
Percentage of American men who say they sleep in the nude : 19
Percentage of American women : 6
Copies of *Bride's* bought by the magazine's average reader : 7
Percentage of black high-school graduates under 25 who are unemployed : 26.8
Percentage of white high-school dropouts under 25 who are unemployed : 26.2
Amount South Africa spends to educate the average white student each year (in rand) : 1,385
The average "colored" student : 872
The average black student : 192
Number of Jews permitted to emigrate from the Soviet Union in 1979 : 51,320
In 1984 : 896
Number of Americans who emigrate each year : 100,000
Percentage of New York City children who live below the poverty line : 40
Average age at which American girls began to menstruate in 1900 : 14.3
In 1984 : 12.9
Percentage of American obstetricians/gynecologists who have been sued for malpractice : 67
Number of Americans who have been killed on the job by robots : 1
Number of Americans currently frozen in the hope of one day coming back to life : 11
Number of Americans holding reservations with Pan Am for a trip to the moon : 90,002

Figures cited are the latest available as of April 1985. Sources are listed on page 74.

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ment with handshake agreements or contracts of no more than two pages. It can be done.

Smashing the hidden cameras

I would be greatly remiss if I failed to note a caveat here. This business of eliminating rules and regulations is a big deal—a matter of replacing detailed, written "what if" strictures with trust. Take the last suggestion. The way to eliminate lengthy supplier contracts is to join in long-term partnerships with a small number of quality suppliers. The same thing applies to all the others. You won't reduce the rules and regulations until you remove the underlying causes for them—mistrust and adversarial relations. This is why 9.9 out of 10 "paperwork reduction" committees fail to achieve enduring change. It's also why managers will never reduce bureaucracy until they stop treating people with contempt.

Ross Perot captured the spirit while he was at General Motors: "In Pontiac [Michigan], GM executives' parking garages are heated, while the poor guys who work in the plant freeze their tails off walking to work in the snow. It costs $140,000 a year to heat one parking garage. I'd shut that thing down."

U.S. Steel ignominiously became USX in 1986; it has reduced its United Steel Workers population from 94,000 in 1974 to less than 30,000 today. Yet *Business Week* reported acidly in 1985: "On the 61st floor [of USX's headquarters] in Pittsburgh, uniformed stewards deliver coffee on silver trays to executive suites."

During a visit to Columbus in 1986, a Worthington employee and I struck up a conversation about the American steel industry. It was right after LTV declared bankruptcy. The guy just couldn't fathom how the chairman of that company had the nerve to bring home a $700,000 salary, and pay himself a whopping bonus to boot, for driving a firm over the edge. Neither could I. In fact, the final break between Ross Perot and GM came when that firm's problematic performance in 1986 led it to refuse to pay $1,000 profit-sharing bonuses to hourly workers—while giving executives all they were "entitled" to by traditional practice. "You can't look the troops in the eye and say, 'It's been a bad year; we can't do anything for you,' but then say, 'By the way, we're going to pay ourselves a $1 million bonus,' " Perot said.

I suspect that Perot would have been equally peeved at Lee Iacocca. When asked how he reconciled his $20.6 million compensation in 1986 with cuts in merit pay for other Chrysler employees, Iacocca replied, "That's the American way. If little kids don't aspire to make money like I did, what the hell good is this country?"

Stop! I want to scream. I don't say this for humanitarian reasons, much as I believe in them. My point is pragmatic: How do you humiliate and demean someone and then expect him or her to care about product quality and constant improvement?

Other humiliations are more subtle. Psychological assessment tests and, certainly, urinalyses are demeaning. Boise Cascade recently suspended a worker for smashing a camera hidden in the ceiling of a locker room to detect theft; employees hadn't been consulted about its installation. Can you imagine what would have happened if the firm's security chief had secretly installed a hidden camera in the executive washroom?

The Mickey Mouse rules that reek of contempt and distrust are part of the negative signals we send. Much of our entry-testing makes clear that we assume the candidate is a misfit or a thief or a drug addict or all three. Then we confirm it daily after he or she comes aboard. For instance, say you want a dollar's worth of stamps in a hurry to get a customer letter out in a timely fashion. It is presumed you are a cheat and want them for personal use, so you have to fill out a 15-line form to get them. Need a spare part to fix a broken machine? Fill out a two-page form, get two supervisors to sign it (if the machine is worth more than $25), and then pass through the double-locked door to the supply room. And then we turn around and have the nerve to ask people to "do it right the first time."

Nucor's Ken Iverson found multicolored hard hats when he arrived at the company: white for workers, blue for foremen, green for department heads. He replaced them with one color—green—for everyone.

At New United Motors Manufacturing Inc. (NUMMI), the auto company operated jointly by General Motors and Toyota, the separate entrances for managers and workers were eliminated, as was the executive lunchroom. The brother of the president of Toyota was the first NUMMI chief; many remarked that they were stunned to see him eating regularly with line workers in the common cafeteria.

The task is daunting, but the proper philosophy is now taking hold. Thousands of success stories, spurred by the development of a word-of-mouth network reflect an increasing efficiency and responsiveness. About nine-tenths of my suggestions cost little or nothing to implement. So what's holding everyone up? □

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What Do Cory Aquino, Cocaine Addicts, and American Consumers Have in Common?

They are all victims of the U.S. sugar program

by Reed Karaim

Quentin Burdick, a crusty, 79-year-old U.S. senator from North Dakota, was back in a home-state office late in August. A small group of farmers had stopped by, and after 27 years of representing one of the most rural states in America, Burdick knew just how to handle them. His gravelly voice rumbled with suitable outrage over Reagan's farm policy, and then, poised to extend sympathy, Burdick turned to a young farmer and asked how he was managing financially.

The farmer blushed. "Oh, he's doing fine," a friend quipped. "He's got sugar beets." They all laughed, and the young farmer looked down, embarrassed to have it so much better than his neighbors.

In this case, you can forget all you've read about the farm crisis. Sugar beet farmers aren't the ones showing up on courthouse steps for bankruptcy auctions. Beet farmers, along with those who grow sugar cane, the other crop that can produce white table sugar, form a tightly knit group of 12,000 that quietly enjoys the sweetest deal in the farm belt.

You probably have heard about the sugar program. It's one of those wrong-headed federal policies that comes in every now and then for a haphazard bashing under the general category of waste, fraud, and abuse. But such broadbrush criticism does not do this unique program justice. How often do you find a government policy that costs grocery shoppers $3 billion annually, jeopardizes Cory Aquino's future, affects the taste of our soda pop, stimulates the Third World's illegal narcotics industry, undermines the Caribbean Basin Initiative, and actually hurts sales of the product it's supposed to protect?

That's quite a coup, particularly for a tiny program that helps only 10,000 sugar beet farmers and 2,000 sugar cane growers, many of them well-to-do businessmen who fit the traditional image of America's struggling family farmers about as well as J.R. Ewing does that of the average oil wildcatter. It's not surprising many sugar growers turn beet red when someone starts looking at the sugar program closely.

To appreciate the envy other farmers might feel, you have to understand how the sugar business works. By using quotas to severely limit the amount of cheaper foreign sugar allowed into the United States, the government props up the domestic price to about 20 cents a pound, more than three times the world price. Then the domestic industry helps maintain the high prices by limiting the number of farmers who grow beets and the number of acres they grow.

Let's say a young farmer in North Dakota's Red River Valley reaches the obvious conclusion that sugar beets could be his ticket to prosperity. (While sugar cane is grown primarily in tropical areas, sugar beets thrive in the midwest.) This North Dakotan is a good farmer. He has a diploma in agronomy from the local land-grant university hanging on the wall. He's certain he could raise a healthy crop of beets.

But he can't. Not without a contract with one of the beet processing factories that are the crop's only market. These factories, many of them owned by the growers themselves, come back to

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the same farmers year after year for sugar beets. If our young farmer is persistent, he'll have to buy a contract from an existing grower. Last year, in the middle of agriculture's worst depression in 50 years, farmers were paying $700 an acre for the right to sell an acre's worth of beets. You could buy land for less than that.

There is a long list of farmers waiting for a chance to sign on with beet factories. A few sugar beet farms in California are owned by big corporate entities, but most of the country's beet farms are run by families in the midwest and plains states that have been fortunate, persistent, or wealthy enough to land a contract. The business operates a little differently with sugar cane. It is grown mostly by large cane processors and growers—five companies control 95 percent of the Hawaiian cane industry, for example—but the result is the same: not everyone with a strong yeoman's work ethic can be a sugar farmer.

Pricey ice cream

The sugar price has to be kept high artificially because the United States is a pretty lousy place to raise sugar. The climate in most of the country can accommodate only beets, which have to be diced up and cooked to make sugar, costing as much as 40 percent more than milling sugar cane. But even U.S. cane growers can't compete with farmers in Central America. "This is a major industry in which the developing tropical countries have one of their few natural advantages," notes Dennis Avery, the State Department's senior agricultural analyst.

To compensate for America's comparative disadvantage, the federal government has been protecting the nation's sugar farmers for almost 100 years. Starting with the McKinley Bill of 1890, which paid American growers a bounty of two cents per pound of sugar to promote the fledgling sugar beet industry, Congress has approved sugar act after sugar act to protect these farmers from international competition. Only twice, in 1975-76 and 1980-81, when worldwide sugar shortages sent prices sky high, did the growers attempt to sell sugar without government protection. Both times a glut ensued, world sugar prices tumbled, and the growers quickly scampered back under Uncle Sam's umbrella.

And as U.S. sugar production inches upward, the import quotas will likely get tighter. (It's almost impossible to keep farmers from improving their yields annually.) Only 1.1 million tons of sugar will be allowed into the United States in 1987, according to the Agriculture Department, down from more than 4.8 million tons in 1980. Agriculture officials estimate sugar imports will be down to zero by 1990.

The growers are benefiting from blatant protectionism, of course, the kind for which we regularly bash the Japanese. Sometimes, as with the U.S. steel companies, trade quotas can give an industry time to retool, cut costs, and face up to the future. We trade a slight increase in kitchenware prices for jobs in Gary, Indiana. Not a bad bargain.

In the case of sugar, however, the scales are a bit out of balance. On one scale we have the 12,000 farmers, 2 percent of America's 600,000 commercial farmers. The other scale is spilling over with losers.

First, there's the American consumer. The growers proudly boast that the program doesn't cost taxpayers a cent because they aren't getting direct subsidies from the government. But in effect the inflated price is an excise tax you pay at the grocery store—about $3 billion annually.

You pay every time you bite into a candy bar or ladle a spoonful of sugar on your cornflakes. Your gallon of ice cream costs about ten cents more than it would were the U.S. sugar price at world levels. A five-pound bag of sugar costs three times what it might without the price supports. "We could afford to pay every sweetener grower in the United States almost $250,000 in cash and it would be cheaper than extracting the high prices for sugar the current law requires," claims Linwood Tipton, a spokesman for a coalition of consumer and business groups that oppose the sugar program.

Cane and cocaine

Then there's American foreign policy. Although public criticism of the sugar program almost always focuses on the cost to American consumers, the greater price is being paid abroad. No one knows this better than Philippine President Corazon Aquino, most of whose problems are rooted in a sickly economy.

Say you're an out-of-work sugar cane cutter in the Philippines. Your nine brothers and sisters are urging you to get a job so they can eat. But you've been waiting for work for more than a year and your prospects don't look good. After all, there are about 250,000 other unemployed cane cutters in the Philippines. What do you do? Well, a fair number of you have wandered into the jungle and joined the communist insurgency. Would you come back for a job? As long as the U.S. sugar

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"We could afford to pay every sweetener grower in the United States almost $250,000 in cash, and it would be cheaper than extracting the high prices for sugar the current law requires," says a spokesman for consumer groups.

program is around, we're not likely to find out. "If we would allow them to regain their sugar market, it would be very, very helpful. They're so desperate right now economically. This is one of the areas where we could help them without cost to the U.S. taxpayers," says Ralph Harding, a Washington lobbyist for the Philippine sugar industry.

Just give the Filipinos a "level playing field," and their business will boom. They produce sugar well under the world price while ours is well above it. Growers from Brazil, the Dominican Republic, several small Caribbean nations, and Australia enjoy advantages similar to those enjoyed by the Philippines.

Now suppose you're a sugar farmer in Belize. The sugar mill has closed and sugar cane growing is pointless because of the U.S. quotas. What do you do? Grow marijuana. State Department officials say that without sugar cane, farmers in tropical nations are increasingly turning to growing marijuana and the coca plant, the raw product for cocaine. In Belize, local officials petitioned the Reagan administration for help, warning that the sugar farmers would practice an unfortunate style of crop diversification. "They had a sugar problem. Now there's a narcotics problem," a State Department official dryly observes. Sugar cane once provided badly needed export earnings and jobs for many poorer nations, including most of the countries the United States is trying to help through President Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative, the one, the president said, has as its "centerpiece" a program of "free trade for Caribbean Basin products exported to the United States."

A nice idea. The U.S. State Department shells out foreign aid to help Caribbean countries repair economies that have been devastated by the policies of the U.S. Agriculture Department. In 1981, those countries sold $603 million worth of sugar to the United States. By 1985, that total had fallen to $263 million. During the same period, American foreign aid to those nations climbed by $427 million to $1.2 billion. "It's a bad joke. That the United States would put forth a Caribbean Basin Initiative and then withdraw an even greater amount than the [Caribbean Basin Initiative] offers from their economies through our sugar program," says Avery of the State Department.

But don't think the U.S. doesn't have a heart. To atone for cutting sugar imports, we ship government surplus food stocks to several Caribbean countries. The Dominican Republic, the largest beneficiary, received $46 million worth last year, much of which fed, you guessed it, out-of-work cane cutters.

So, to summarize the international effect of our sugar policy: America ships food to the Dominican Republic to feed farm workers who are going hungry because they can't sell to the United States the one crop they grow well. U.S. taxpayers pay to ship surplus food to the Caribbean at the same time they pay, as consumers, for the higher sugar costs that result from keeping the cheaper foreign sugar out, not to mention the social costs of cocaine addiction.

Oh, I almost forgot. In a desperate effort to revive their economy, the Dominican Republic has begun selling low-cost sugar to the Soviet Union.

If none of this moves you, I have one more plea: think about the poor *United States* sugar industry. The great irony of the sugar program is that in addition to hurting the rest of the world, the price supports are slowly destroying the sugar market in the United States. The price is so high that food and beverage companies are turning to corn syrup and other sweeteners. Beet and cane sugar used to be the principal ingredient in soda pop. Not anymore. Even Classic Coke uses high-

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fructose corn syrup as a sweetener. The corn sweetener price is pegged just below the sugar price. Not surprisingly, the Corn Growers Association has become one of the biggest boosters of the sugar program in Congress.

The switch from sugar to other sweeteners, along with the tightening of the quotas, has hurt not only growers but sugar refiners. For example, eight out of 22 cane sugar refineries have gone out of business since the latest, most restrictive sugar quotas became law in 1981.

If America continues to satisfy its sweet tooth with other sweeteners and the sugar price starts to fall, cane and beet sugar will begin showing up in government warehouses. Processors have the option of defaulting on federally guaranteed loans if the price tumbles below profitable levels. What then? Perhaps we'll have government programs to give homeless people free chocolate bars.

Rat food

You might have guessed by now that the sugar program drives the State Department a little crazy. President Reagan doesn't like it much either and has tried to change it since he got into office. Consumer groups loathe it, as do candy and cereal companies and many of our allies. You're probably wondering why the program is still around.

Meet Horace D. Godfrey, the "godfather" of sugar lobbyists. With his easy smile, soft Carolinian accent, and big diamond stick pin confidently set in the middle of his tie, Godfrey is one serene lobbyist. He's happy to sit a spell and chat about the government's sugar program and its "friends" on the hill. The list gets so long I set down my pen and simply listen in wonder. On the wall in Godfrey's Washington office are a plaque honoring him as one of the 100 most influential men in Washington and a chrome-plated sugar cane cutting knife. A fitting tribute, since the godfather and the sugar lobby have been chopping up the opposition for years.

Godfrey, age 72, has been in Washington 27 years. He describes himself as "the oldest rat in the barn." If that is so, the sugar cane and beet farmers whose interests he promotes are the fattest rats in the barn, kept that way by Uncle Sam.

Yes, there has been a seven-year depression in the farm belt. And for many it has been tragic. But when the national media focuses on something, perspective tends to flatten out. The problems of some farmers become the problems of all farmers, even those who have experienced sweet times. "American agriculture is in the worst depression I've seen," said Rep. Jerry Huckaby, a Louisianian who chairs the House Agriculture sugar subcommittee. "Do we force these farmers who are holding their own into a depression? I have to go with the American farmer."

So when farm bills have come to the floor of Congress in the past few years, legislators, justifiably preoccupied with the plight of wheat and corn farmers, have left sugar alone. It didn't hurt, of course, that sugar growers' political action committees doled out $2.1 million to members of Congress during the past two national election campaigns. "We've been to bat several times," Godfrey observes. "We've won with more than two-thirds of the vote every time!"

His success illustrates a simple truth about congressional politics: a well-organized minority, even one as miniscule as 12,000 farmers, almost always wins out against the less-focused desires of the great majority. Members of Congress know that a few constituents may grumble, but no one is going to vote a congressman out of office because of the high price of Hershey bars. On the other hand, lawmakers can count on sugar growers raising Cain on Capitol Hill when anyone mentions touching the quotas.

In fact, the current sugar program is so solidly in place that the Reagan administration had to struggle last year to find anyone in Congress willing to introduce a change (a modest attempt to change the loan rate but compensate growers with direct payments). Rep. John Porter, a Republican from a suburb of Chicago who has no farmers in his district, finally agreed to lend his name to the bill.

Not surprisingly, the legislation went nowhere. "This is about what I expected," Porter said. "It was referred to the Agriculture Committee, where it disappeared." Even though Porter hardly has been out front pushing the bill, he's received letters from a few voters in his district, employees of companies with strong agri-business connections, telling him to leave sugar alone. The different agricultural commodities stick together; tobacco lobbyists will back up sugar lobbyists and vice versa. Prick any part of the agricultural lobby and the ungainly beast reflexively swats back. When Sen. Bill Bradley tried to cut the sugar program in 1985, corn farmers came to its defense and in turn gained sugar-state legislators' help with their farm bill problems.

Ironically, the current tough sugar quotas Bradley and Porter have fought wouldn't even exist if it hadn't been for the Reagan administra-

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tion. In 1981 it was initially fighting to block a bill that strengthened the sugar quota. But in the last frenetic minutes of the debate over Reagan's first budget, a desperate David Stockman, then director of the Office of Management and Budget, fearing he was a few votes short, began handing out legislative goodies right and left to round up support. Louisiana Rep. John Breaux, now a senator, was the prime "shakedown artist" on the sugar import quotas, according to Stockman. Breaux and other sugar-state congressmen demanded that the administration drop its opposition to the quotas in return for their votes on the budget. With time running out, Stockman agreed to support the quotas, a deal "that turned his stomach," and prompted Breaux's now-classic quote: "I can't be bought, but I can be rented."

Sleeping better at night

I grew up in North Dakota, and I've known and interviewed a lot of farmers over the years. They're a remarkably stubborn lot, and most have continued to insist, right through hard times, that American farms can lick anybody if given a fair chance. Many sugar beet growers, though, don't pretend they could survive on their own. Unlike the steel manufacturers, who envision a day when American steel is again on top, sugar farmers rarely boast they will some day best the competition. They argue they should never have to face it. "If we had to go to world prices, we wouldn't have a sugar beet grower left in the United States. You'd just fold them all up," says Rodney Schmidt, a Minnesota farmer.

It's true that if the sugar program disappeared tomorrow, the economies of the Red River Valley and a handful of other locations would suffer. Although the government could help ease the transition, there's no denying that sugar farmers would be hurt by the elimination of the sugar program. They could turn to other crops, but raising wheat, barley, and soybeans these days is also a tough way to make a living.

It comes down to a simple case of weighing the interests of the few against those of the many. The sugar program should be dumped. If nothing else, the sugar farmers might get some satisfaction out of knowing they've helped 230 million American consumers, starving peasants in roughly 30 countries, democracy in the Philippines, and maybe even a few drug addicts in New York. They could even join their friends in complaining about the farm economy without blushing. □

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

Journalism Award

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The Rise and Fall of Britain's Neoliberals

The Social Democratic Party is kinder than Thatcher, smarter than Labour—so why is it falling apart?

by Polly Toynbee

Six years ago, when four members of the British Parliament walked out of the Labour party and formed the left-center Social Democratic party, all signs indicated a desperate need, and indeed a popular demand, for a third party. When it was founded, polls showed that well over 50 percent of the voters would vote for the SDP—if they thought it had a chance of winning. But that has turned out to be a gigantic "if." Now, following the general election in June, when it failed to break through the near impenetrable barrier of a first-past-the-post electoral system, the SDP has split apart and lies in tattered disarray. It has fallen prey to the fatal tendency of small parties out of power to turn upon themselves looking for scapegoats.

After Labour lost the 1979 general election to Margaret Thatcher, it did what it has always done: it ceded power to its most left-wing elements, which succeeded in changing the way the party leadership was selected. That resulted in the election of Michael Foot, elderly guru and a keeper of the socialist conscience. The party turned unilateralist, calling for the abolition of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent and opposing the installation of U.S. cruise missiles on British soil. It produced a platform calling for more nationalization, including the nationalization of banks, and other unpopular socialist policies that flew in the face of changes taking place in the wake of Margaret Thatcher's victory.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Thatcher launched her own revolution, breaking the postwar consensus in British politics. She declared war on the welfare state and the attitudes that went with it. She began to outline her program for the privatization of large parts of nationalized industry. The policy that won her the most support on her road to victory was the sale of public housing to its tenants at knock-down prices. She was not personally popular—indeed her personal rating fell to the lowest of any prime minister ever—but she was ruthlessly determined and admired for her strength.

The great majority of voters appeared to have no taste for the politics of either extreme, and were uneasy, sometimes indignant at the Manichean choice laid out before them. Moreover, the SDP leaders—the Gang of Four—who formed the new party consisted of Roy Jenkins, then president of the Commission of the European Economic Community, who had been a Labour chancellor of the exchequer and home secretary;

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The Gang of Four: (left to right) William Rodgers, Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams, David Owen.

Shirley Williams, who had, among other posts, been a Labour education secretary; William Rodgers, a transport minister; and David Owen, a health minister and a remarkably young foreign secretary. All had been part of a faction of the right within the Labour party as it moved rapidly leftwards.

A kick-start for business

What kind of party did the Gang of Four set out to create? The Labour and Conservative parties denounced it as unprincipled, rootless, destined to bend with the prevailing wind, stealing a little from either side, appealing to that essentially antipolitical urge found in all democracies where some people yearn hopelessly for less conflict and more agreement. The very same accusations are made in the United States against the neoliberals.

Certain broad policies were laid down in the original SDP constitution—a commitment to the Common Market and to NATO and to the creation of a more open and classless society. But it took time for the real character of the party to emerge. Gradually, the SDP made a wholehearted commitment to the market economy and to free enterprise—words never used in the Labour party.

It was not until after the SDP's first general election in 1983, when David Owen took over the leadership, that the SDP started to appreciate the scale and the permanence of the Thatcher revolution in British politics. Whether Thatcher was the cause or the result, the pursuit of profit and private enterprise was now at the top of the national political agenda. As nationalized industries were sold off by the government, public anxiety turned to strong approval. The government offered shares in these industries at bargain prices, creating a vast new pool of shareholders from people who had never owned a share in their lives.

Under Owen, the SDP moved away from an

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automatic opposition to these sell-offs. It urged competition in industry and opposed the establishment of monopolies in the newly privatized telephone and gas companies. Competition became the cornerstone of the SDP's industrial and enterprise policies, setting it apart from the far left and the far right. (The Labour party, following the traditional trade union and socialist lines, opposed all privatization; the Conservative party favored privatization but tolerated monopolies.) SDP advocated tax-free bonds for high-risk investments and regional development agencies—all to give industry a kick-start.

The importance of this was not so much the policies themselves—the electorate was never much interested in the specifics—but the waving of a bright flag to signal the SDP's belief in the value of enterprise for its own sake. While the Labour party had truculently accepted the need for a private sector to generate wealth so they could tax it back and spend it themselves, the SDP regarded private wealth as good and high taxation as economically undesirable. They never ducked the fact that taxes would be slightly higher under the SDP, but they refused to return to the astronomical rates that the Conservatives had brought down steadily.

What made the SDP more than a watered-down Conservative party? It put forward the most radical program for redistribution of wealth to the poor that any party had yet proposed. Because the Labour party was locked into class warfare—trade unions against management—it was ideologically unable to recognize that the majority of British were doing well and that their standards of living were rising fast. Labour also ignored those who were not represented by trade unions, those who were falling away just as fast—the old, the one-parent families, the unemployed and the unemployable.

Only the SDP, free of the grip of the trade unions, was able to tackle the problem realistically. It advocated that money be redistributed not just from the rich but from all those who were doing well. In practical terms, this meant removing some anomalous tax allowances from those in work and giving that money in benefits to the poor. The Married Man's Tax Allowance was the biggest of these, predicated on an outdated assumption that wives were an economic burden even though 70 percent now worked.

The SDP also advocated a major shift away from universal benefits toward benefits targeted to the poor. That meant increasing the state pension for those with no other income, for instance, and gradually reducing it for the rest. It also meant taking the universal child benefit of seven pounds a week, greatly increasing it, but taxing it back from families who did not need it.

The SDP was determined to expand the economy in a Keynesian fashion. The Labour party made the same commitment but offered no mechanism to stop the wage demands of the unions or to create new jobs for the poor. In government, Labour had proved itself entirely incapable of stopping rapid wage inflation. The trade unions were their paymasters and played a large role in Labour government economic policy-making. The SDP had no such ties and was insistent that new money injected into the economy should be targeted at industries that would create the most employment, especially in the inner cities.

The SDP owed its rise to the changing class perceptions of the past ten years. The blue-collar workforce had rapidly diminished into a minority. Home ownership had grown as fast. Only the poor now looked to the state for their security. Most wanted the state to turn from provider to enabler. Yet both old parties represented an outdated view of class loyalty. The very act of supporting the SDP was a gesture of classlessness, and much of its support came from white-collar workers, young managers, and technocrats, whose parents were blue-collar workers. It's identity as a classless party was probably as much of an attraction as any of its policies.

A ramshackle rump

There was euphoria and wild optimism in the SDP's early days. They won some spectacular by-elections to Parliament and local council elections up and down the country. A large and influential part of the intelligentsia flocked to their support. Local chapters grew up overnight, often manned by people with no campaign experience who were wide-eyed about what could be achieved in a short time. But wiser political heads warned of the inexorable mathematics of the electoral system, unless there were further major breaks in the two parties.

The voters understand all too well the nature of Britain's bizarre and antiquated winner-takes-all electoral system, which exists elsewhere only in ex-British colonies where Britain left behind its own miserable constitution. It is a system irredeemably built around a two-party democracy, and it crushes third-party contenders to death. It is possible for a third party to have more

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Shirley Williams was always a muddled thinker wishing to be seen firmly on the left yet never quite enunciating what the left should be.

than 30 percent of the popular vote, spread evenly around the country, and win scarcely a seat in Parliament.

There was one other major obstacle in the SDP's path. Already occupying the center ground was the old Liberal party, a ramshackle rump of dubious principles, a repository for a mild protest vote over the years. It was the remains of the grand old Liberal party of the nineteenth century, which was superceded by the Labour party in the first decade of this century. Traditionally its vote went up when the Conservatives were in power, the party becoming a safe resting place for disaffected Tories, and went down when Labour was in—down sometimes to as low as 3 percent in the polls.

The Liberal party's most remarkable quality has been its ability to survive through the dark night of the past 60 years. Its survival has depended on dedicated local activists. In some areas they have been very right-wing and in others almost indistinguishable from the Labour party. It's clearest identity has been with environmental issues, antinuclear power, and, on many occasions, antinuclear weapons. Almost anyone who calls himself a Liberal and chooses to set up a local chapter can do so with no interference from the central party, which has never had funds to impose a central organization. This inability to run a formal party structure has been turned, over the years, into a virtue by Liberal activists, who swear by the independence of every local party and the right of any candidate to control election literature and endorse any policies that capture his or her fancy.

The Liberal party's greatest asset, though, is its leader, David Steel. He has tried to produce credible policies from this hopelessly anarchic party structure. But at the annual party conference, where almost any Liberal can turn up and vote, he finds his policies thrown askew, particularly on the disarmament issue. He has never taken on the party and confronted its internal contradictions.

For the newly arrived SDP it seemed electorally impossible to put up candidates against the Liberals in the center ground. It would have guaranteed failure for both parties in all seats. That meant that an electoral pact, an alliance, was essential.

A tangle of tin cans

After much wrangling, each party was allocated roughly half the districts in which to put up candidates. The Liberals took the 50 best seats, on the grounds that their candidates had been fighting hard for years and couldn't and wouldn't be stood down in favor of SDP newcomers. Even at the end of the inevitably bitter shake-out, some Liberal candidates held out in their local redoubts and refused to be budged.

The dazzling new rocket taking off from its launch pad into the clear blue skies now had the Liberal party attached to it, holding it back like a tangle of old tin cans. The Liberal party is an old party of failure, about whom there have been so many jokes that it has its own self-mocking song book of lost causes and fruitless campaigns. The Liberals are dubbed "the party of lost deposits" because parliamentary candidates must put up 1,000 pounds as a deposit.

One major policy difference between the Liberals and the SDP was defense. David Steel and his supporters are not unilateralists, but almost every year in the past ten years the Liberal Assembly has voted against nuclear weapons. It seems to be an extraordinary form of masochism that has gripped both the Liberal and Labour parties for the past two elections. However often the polls and their own common sense tell them that no party will ever win an election in Britain if it looks soft on defense, they prefer the feel of their own consciences to winning.

Being allied with a party widely regarded as unilateralist has been a great liability for the SDP. The SDP's Owen has had to spend an inordinate amount of time sounding tough about defense

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What made the SDP more than a watered-down Conservative party? It put forward the most radical program of redistribution of wealth to the poor that any party had yet proposed.

to try to counterbalance that impression. Only months before the last election, the destructive Liberal Assembly, in a fit of self-indulgence, again voted against nuclear weapons. As a result, throughout the election, the Alliance polling showed that people's strongest reason for not voting Alliance was weakness on defense. Defense is a curious issue. Not many people lie in bed fearing Russian invasion. Yet, as an issue, it has become a Plimsoll line, testing the seaworthiness of a political party. A whiff of unilateralism makes a party unelectable.

Despite their defense stance, Liberals are not left-wing in all ways. They strongly resisted the SDP's poverty package as far too radical and were dragged into agreement only shortly before the last election.

Liberal party members, of course, saw themselves as the key to the Alliance. They were veterans. They had staying power in adversity, while the SDP leaders would probably pack up and go home if they didn't win the first election. Some Liberals said the SDP was far too right-wing; others said it was still too contaminated by its Labour party origins. They were suspicious, jealous, and angry that SDP members had not chosen to join the Liberal party in the first place.

So, uneasily, the two parties went into the 1983 election together. Roy Jenkins, the elected SDP leader, was given the somewhat preposterous title of prime minister designate, while David Steel was named leader of the joint campaign. The two fell out during the campaign after Jenkins's performance on television resulted in a drop in his personal poll ratings. Steel knifed him neatly and publicly in the back and emerged for the second part of the campaign as the effective leader.

The result was a disappointment but not a disaster. The Alliance won 26 percent of the vote, and the Labour party self-destructed into its worst vote ever, only 28 percent. Mrs. Thatcher won in a colossal landslide, despite getting only 46 percent of the vote, less than she had polled in 1979. There was no despair in the SDP, though the members of Parliament who had come over from Labour lost their seats, as predicted. It seemed that Labour was in terminal decline, and with just one more push, the Alliance would overtake them next time.

Thatcher's revolution

Shortly after the 1983 election, David Owen took over as an SDP leader of a very different order. Jenkins was a distinguished establishment figure of culture, elegance, and charm, a speechmaker of exceptional thoughtfulness and intellect, yet he was uninterested in the daily cut and thrust of politicking. As an older man, he harkened back to the failed policies of the sixties and seventies, notably wage restraint. He never really grappled with the changed political reality that helped to create the SDP.

Under Owen, the SDP found itself in very different hands. Long before his accession, a distinct *froideur* had grown up between Owen and the rest of the Gang of Four—Jenkins, Williams, and Rodgers—whose feet were still too firmly entrenched in their Labour roots. Shirley Williams saw her role as the conscience of the party. A magnificently moving speaker with a silken voice and emotional delivery, she is still plainly ill at ease with her defection from socialism. She had always been, her ex-cabinet colleagues say, a muddled thinker, wishing to be seen firmly on the left, yet never quite enunciating what these left-wing policies should be. Rodgers suffered some of the same confusion. They constantly took rear-guard actions to try to undermine Owen, yet it was never clear what their objections were. It was just their vague feeling that Owen was moving too far, too fast to the right.

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Owen emerged at once as an outstanding political leader with phenomenal energy and dynamism. From the beginning he had an agenda that was clear and precise, while others were struggling over the identity of the new party. He saw, as few did, that the Thatcher revolution was real and permanent. This was no mere temporary hiccup in postwar consensus politics. People were richer and wanted more independence from the state. High taxation did not appear to have yielded a fairer society. Home ownership had become an achievable goal for the great majority. Sixty-four percent of people now own their own houses, compared with 30 percent 20 years ago—a remarkable change.

At its worst, Thatcherism represents selfishness. A few months before the election she had reduced the income tax by 2 percent, and it is hard to lose an election on that. In Thatcher's view, people should not expect handouts from the state; they should buy private health insurance and private education. They should accumulate wealth—mainly in the form of property—to pass on to their children. Looking after yourself and your own is the first duty of every citizen and the devil takes the hindmost.

At her best, Mrs. Thatcher has broken the stranglehold the unions held over the economy. She returned trade unions to their proper role as the protectors of their members' rights, and not as absolute arbiters of government economic policy. She brought in a new spirit of entrepreneurship that has seen new small business flourish as never before.

A breath of fresh air blew through the system. No party that denies the value of these changes has much chance of succeeding. David Owen has taken what is best in Thatcherism *and*, at the same time, has appealed to the unselfish instinct of the people. Britain should not have to choose between a sound market economy and a welfare state that cares for those who cannot compete in it, Owen argues. That is what he means when he advocates the "social market economy," a term that the other three SDP leaders regard as veering to the right.

But the truth is that personalities often matter far more in politics than anyone openly acknowledges. Owen has defects as a leader because he is impatient with those who lack his clear sense of direction. He is abrasive in discussion, even with his closest allies. He has a touch of Coriolanus about him. When on a public platform or in front of a camera or a journalist, he says what he thinks, and often unwisely. He does not bend willingly, appease, or compromise. This contributes to the impression that he is a right-winger, for he does not seem like a moderate man. Yet no one could question his commitment to a poverty program that far outstrips Labour party policies. It is his personal badge of radicalism, and he has steered it through harsh criticism, spelling out who the losers would be under SDP taxation and how much they would lose with an empassioned persuasiveness for the rightness of this course. He dwarfed the Gang of Three, who have faded on the political horizon and cannot hide the intensity of their dislike for him. It is this, far more than any policy difference, that has led to the current SDP split.

The two-party squeeze

This past June the SDP and the Liberal party fought again as the Alliance. They were packaged as two equal leaders, but Owen towered over Steel, who deferred to him at every turn. (A cruel satire program on British television depicts Steel as a puppet inside Owen's jacket pocket.) This time the election result was a disaster for the Alliance. It was clear from the outset that Thatcher was bound to win. There was no reason for her to be unseated. The Alliance fell back only 3 percent on its 1983 showing, but it felt worse. Its seats dropped from 27 to 22. It was also a disaster for Labour, which fought a brilliant campaign. Their platform was more socialist than that of the Alliance, and certainly more militantly opposed to nuclear weapons, but they had an attractive leader in Neil Kinnock, as U.S. Senator Joseph Biden knows all too well. Even so, they improved on 1983 (their worst ever showing) by only 3 percent, to 32 percent.

Within two days of the election, the Alliance fell upon its sword. Leading Liberals sharpened their knives to slice up Steel. Hours after the polls closed, two of them tossed their hats in the ring as putative Liberal leaders to replace him. Then to everyone's surprise, Steel suddenly showed the nerve and dynamism he had lacked during the election. Without consulting David Owen, he announced a proposal to merge the SDP and the Liberals, and, in collusion with Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams, and William Rodgers, who had long favored a merger, a campaign was started—"Merger or Bust." No merger and the Liberals would go their own way.

Now the battle rages. The SDP is split between the Owenites, who want to retain the separate identity of the SDP, and those who favor not just

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an alliance but a merger. The Gang of Three would rather merge and abolish the SDP they created. Better to destroy David Owen than to stay in a separate SDP with him.

The whole spectacle resembles, alas, the fissiparous state of obscure Trotskyite parties, who, lacking the discipline of the prospect of power, turn to the joys of fighting one another on points of ideological purity. The mergerites believe that a combined SDP-Liberal party allied with Labour could defeat Thatcher.

On the other side, the Owenites fear being swallowed into the anarchic maw of the Liberal party and the end of the social democratic idea. They argue that even a merged party allied with Labour would be doomed. The last three elections have shown the antisocialist majority to be far bigger than the anti-Thatcher majority. The only hope of victory is to gain votes from the Conservatives, as well as from Labour. For as long as a party even threatens to coalesce with Labour, it will not gain a single Conservative vote. When Labour rallied a little at the start of the last campaign, it was enough to terrify the soft Conservative voters back into the Thatcher camp. People would vote for the Alliance only so long as they were sure it wouldn't put Labour into power. This is the nature of the two-party squeeze.

Sadly, the SDP enterprise may be lost either way—damned if they do merge, damned if they don't. If they decide in their final ballot, scheduled for early next year, not to merge, they still have to fight with the Liberals within the Alliance. All they can do is hope, as they always have, that the Labour party will fall into such disarray that there will be further splits, or, that some Conservatives will become so disgusted with Thatcher's politics of greed that they will break away.

Crushing force

Only a system of proportional representation can let the SDP in. So far both old parties resist it. But the time may come—and there are signs already—when the Labour party, unlikely ever to govern alone again, will find that proportional representation provides the only possibility for a return to power.

In this last election the SDP/Liberal Alliance tallied 23 percent of the popular vote, but because it was spread evenly it gained only 22 of the 650 parliamentary seats. Under a proportional representation system, as in most of Europe, the party would have gained 156 seats, and there would have been a coalition government with either Labour or the Conservatives. The SDP is caught in an old trap. It could break through only under proportional representation but it can bring in proportional representation only when it has broken through.

Americans who watched the rise of the SDP with enthusiasm ask in bewilderment why it didn't work. Plainly there was a public demand for a nonsocialist alternative to Thatcherism. Opinion polls from the very first showed that people wanted the SDP to succeed. Its support was huge, and it was greeted with enthusiasm and remarkable press support. In Owen it had the leader with the greatest charisma, intellect, and political talent in the land. Every necessary ingredient was there.

So how could it fail? It had one, and perhaps two, opportunities to persuade the voters. By the 1983 election, it had not taken off to break through the barrier of the two-party system. After that it was hard to persuade the voters it ever could. Infuriatingly, the voters on the doorsteps would wish SDP canvassers well but not promise to vote for them. They saved their votes to cast against whichever of the two old parties they hated most.

The SDP failed to make the middle way sound like a great political ideal—the kind of thrilling idea that sweeps people out of old loyalties. Voters would often look with puzzlement and ask, "But what do you stand *for*?" In truth, it was a question the SDP could never answer as sharply and succinctly as the other parties. There was no slogan, there was no pithy phrase that said it all. Thoughtful, reasonable—but, ultimately, unelectable.

Now, painful soul-searching and blame-seeking grows day by day in the remnants of the SDP. Merger, which will amount to a Liberal takeover, seems almost inevitable. A small rump of the SDP will remain around Owen and two of the SDP's five members of Parliament, a tattered reminder of what might have been.

But the overriding reason for the party's failure remains the electoral system. Even a third party that started out with such glittering assets, such popular good will, could not break through its iron rule. The failure of the SDP remains a solemn reminder to all dissident politicians in the two old parties never to buck the electoral system. Its inexorable crushing force will break any third party, any new grouping, long before they get the chance to break it. □

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WHO'S WHO in the Administration

After we wrote in September about how White House infighting declines as an administration approaches its end, our West Wing sources hastened to tell us that there is still some infighting going on. The battles are not for influence over policy but for office space, perks, and titles. The office space race seems to be won by those who secure squatters' rights by getting there first. The perks are awarded by **Rhett Dawson**, who is therefore the object of much solicitous attention. And the titles are sought because everybody is trying to polish up their resumes for their January 1989 departure....

Two of the more pathetic figures around the current White House are **Ken Cribb**, assistant to the president for domestic affairs, and **Dan Crippen**, deputy assistant to the president, who seem to wander around with nothing to do but attend meetings....

Kenneth Duberstein appears to have won the war with **Thomas Griscom** over who will be the principal power under **Howard Baker**. Baker is closer to Griscom, but Griscom's organizational role as director of communications leaves him out of the loop on much of the West Wing action. Duberstein's role as deputy chief of staff puts him right in the middle of the busiest intersection....

James Baker continues to be the most powerful member of the administration on domestic issues. Baker, by the way, is said to have been disturbed about **Alan Greenspan**'s failure to consult him about the Fed's September increase in the discount rate. Baker felt that Greenspan should have gotten Japan and West Germany to lower their interest rates in return....

Richard Godwin, who was supposed to have been the Pentagon's spending czar and who recently resigned in frustration, was not quite the White Knight the press has made him out to be—see "Tilting at Windmills," September. But his departure does raise serious questions about both the will and the legal authority of **Caspar Weinberger** to control the military spending system. When Godwin asked the Air Force for details about its spending plans, it gave him indecipherable gobbledy-gook, and apparently he did not have the power to do anything about it....

Kenneth P. Bergquist will not be confirmed as assistant secretary of defense for special operations; and **James Burnley**'s appointment to be transportation secretary (see below) will not be confirmed by the Senate. A better choice would be **Patricia Goldman**, vice-chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board. She is not afraid to take on the airlines....

In—*White House:* Deputy U.S. Trade Representative—**Alan F. Holmer**. Director, Office of Government Ethics—**Frank Q. Nebeker**. *Transportation*: Secretary—**James H. Burnley IV.** *Justice*: Assistant Attorney General, Tax Division—**William S. Rose Jr.** *State*: Ambassador to Mozambique—**Melissa F. Wells.** Ambassador to Portugal—**Richard N. Viets**. *Defense*: Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs—**Fred J. Hoffman.**

Out—*White House*: Chairman, Council of Economic Advisers—**Beryl W. Sprinkel**. Director, Office of Government Ethics—**David H. Martin**. *Commerce*: Undersecretary, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—**Anthony J. Calio**. *Defense*: Undersecretary for Acquisition—**Richard Godwin**. *Labor*: Secretary—**William Brock.** *State*: Assistant Secretary, International Organizations—**Alan L. Keyes**. *Transportation*: Secretary—**Elizabeth Hanford Dole**.

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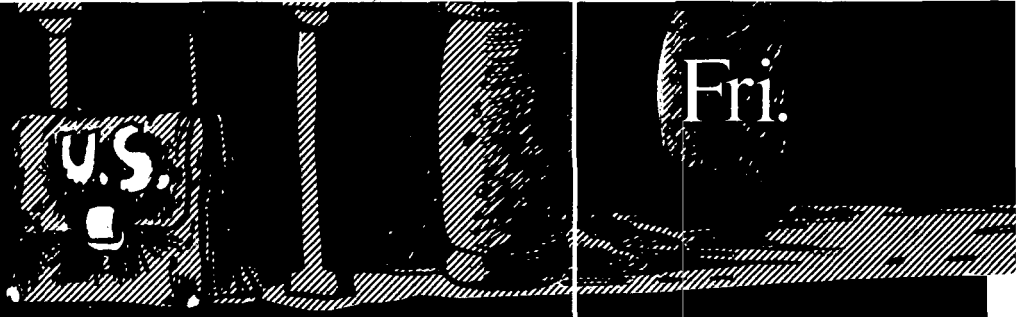

Fri.

The week a lighter perspective gave you a clearer view.

Every week there's a page in Newsweek that takes a lighter look at some heavy subjects.

It's a page called Perspectives. A gathering of cartoons and comments on the world around us and [illegible] that we might otherwise take too seriously.

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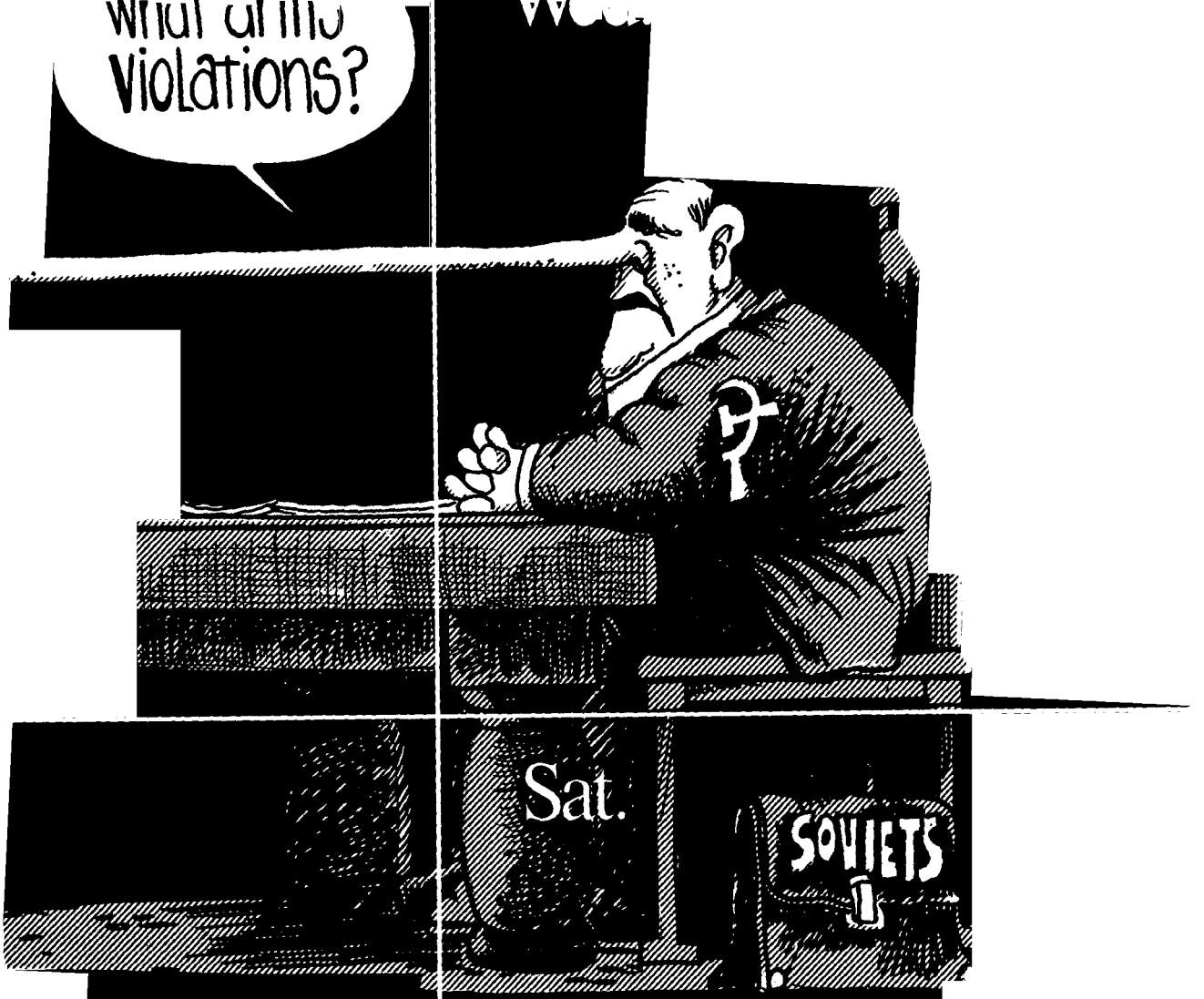

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The author's grandfather standing in front of his store in Wade, North Carolina

The Day I Learned I Was a Racist

by Melton A. McLaurin

His name was James Robert Fuller Jr., but everyone called him Bobo. He was a year younger than I, and I had known him all my life. He lived in a small white frame house in the black neighborhood behind Granddaddy's store. There seemed to be nothing unusual or special about Bobo; he was just another black boy. But Bobo, a child I often looked down upon because of his blackness and his poverty, showed me the emotional power that racial prejudice and segregation held over whites as well as blacks.

Melton A. McLaurin is a professor and chairman of the department of history at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. This article is adapted from his book Separate Pasts: Growing Up White in the Segregated South. *University of Georgia Press.*

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We grew up in Wade, North Carolina, a village of about 1,000 people, during the 1940s and 1950s, when rumblings of racial prejudice were in the air, but before the tumultuous civil rights struggles of the 1960s. The village was located in the heart of southeastern North Carolina's cotton and tobacco country. Coming of age there, I was well-versed in racist dogma, having been instructed from birth in the ideology and etiquette of segregation. In 1953, Wade was almost a perfect microcosm of the rural and small town segregated South. The social patterns of the village had emerged after Reconstruction, had been refined by the turn of the century, and had not changed much since. The Wade of 1953, I later learned, differed little from that of 1933, or for that matter, except for the presence of automobiles and electricity, from the Wade of 1893. It was unimaginable that mine would be the last generation to come of age in the segregated South and that the Wade I knew would soon collapse beneath the irresistible pressures brought to bear by the forces of social change.

I knew Bobo's entire family. James Robert, his father, was a huge man, nearly six-and-a-half feet tall, who appeared even taller to a 13-year-old white boy. He had the physique of many fine athletes—long, thickly muscled arms, long legs sweeping upward to a short waist, above which rested a powerful, well-formed torso. James Robert drove a truck for the Tart Lumber Company, making short runs to scores of hamlets in eastern North Carolina and Virginia. He was a soft-spoken man with a gentle voice and blue-gray eyes. I remember him climbing down from his cab, his long legs stretching to meet the ground, and I recall the easy, loping strides that moved him away from the truck. I also remember him drunk, for like many of Wade's poor male residents, black and white, he turned to the bottle to escape his problems. At such times he was a sad figure even to a white youth: he was a giant to be pitied, his physical size somehow overwhelmed by the circumstances of his life, few of which he determined, and most of which he could not avoid.

Bobo's mother was named Jeanette. Of her four children, Bobo was the oldest. Although Jeanette was still young, probably less than 30 when Bobo was 12, she, like most black women of the village, had few skills that the society valued. For women like Jeanette, who possessed little formal education, there was but one opportunity for employment: she "worked days" as a domestic, as did many of Wade's black women.

Jeanette was quiet, gentle, unobtrusive; all in all she seemed a terribly vulnerable figure. Yet she held her family together. She looked after James Robert, mothered her children, maintained the household, and brought home a supplemental income. When the family fell behind in its payments for the groceries purchased on credit from Granddaddy's store, it was Jeanette who had to beg "Mr. Lonnie" for additional time. Her supplications followed a centuries-old script as humiliating as it was successful.

The role required that Jeanette project an image of childlike naivete and innocence in order to deserve the beneficence of her superior. When she sought an extension of credit or time in which to pay her debt, Jeanette would ease into the store, head bent slightly forward, eyes downcast, her face a sorrowful study of helplessness. Standing across a wooden counter from my grandfather, she would pause and begin to shift her weight gently from foot to foot, and in hushed tones she would plead her case.

"Mr. Lonnie, I needs some things, and I ain't got no money, nothing, Mr. Lonnie. I knows we owe you, and I'll pay you as soon as I can, Mr. Lonnie, honest I will, but I needs some things right now."

After her appeal was delivered, Granddaddy would turn and pick up his ledger book from the counter and read from Jeanette's account. "Jeanette, you owe me $75 on this account. That's a lot of money. I can't keep letting you have groceries without getting paid."

Jeanette would then acknowledge Granddaddy's admonition and continue to press her case. "I know it seems a lot, Mr. Lonnie. But I'll pay—just as soon as I can get the money and get an extra day's work somewhere."

After a long silence, Granddaddy, like a judge sentencing a convicted felon, would deliver his verdict.

"Well, all right. This time. But no more than $5. Not a nickel more. And I want something on your account next week, you hear?"

I accepted such episodes and others equally demeaning to blacks as normal events of daily life. I knew, for I had been told since birth, that whites were superior to blacks (and for that matter, that members of my family were superior to most whites). On the other hand, I had also been taught that one should never mistreat a black, insult a black, or purposely be rude to a black.

"Colored people have souls too," my grandmother, whom my brothers and sisters and I

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This black child had the power to reach the innermost regions of my being and challenge the sureties of my white world.

called "Ma Ma," reminded us more than once. "Some of them will go to heaven with us." Ma Ma, of course, was bent upon getting as many people into heaven as possible. I suspect that she believed that white Christians would need a servant class in the hereafter, although she never elaborated upon her concept of the social status of blacks in the New Jerusalem.

Such moral considerations, however, rarely accounted for the behavior of upper-class whites towards blacks. The main reason one was not expected to abuse blacks had little to do with the admission that blacks were fellow humans. Rather, it was because superior people never treated inferiors in an unseemly manner. In my family, one didn't say "nigger," not because the use of the word caused blacks pain but because it indicated "poor breeding." *Nigger* was a word poor whites used, a term they hurled at blacks (whom the adults in my family always referred to as "colored people") the way my childhood friends from less affluent families hurled pieces of granite from the railway track beds at hapless black children their age or younger. "We don't use that word in our family"—this was the standard response of women in our family to men who did use that word in front of children.

Race, like the trees and the school playgrounds and the dusty streets, was something I rarely thought about and never pondered—that is, until a commonplace occurrence involving Bobo made me aware of the tremendous impact a segregated society had upon my life. He changed my comfortable, secure racist world. He did so unintentionally, yet irrevocably, in the fall of my thirteenth year.

A basketball court was as appropriate a place as any to gain such an understanding. As a child I played football and basketball with Bobo, wrestled with him, and competed against him in other games that were actually boyhood tests of physical strength. Much of the time this play involved physical contact with blacks, and I thought nothing of it. In my childhood, physical proximity to blacks was natural and accepted. During these contests I was aware of Bobo's blackness, conscious that his was a black body pushing against my white skin, but that fact did not concern me and I was not repulsed or upset by it. I had no conscious understanding of a need to best Bobo because he was black, or to triumph because I was white.

In Wade, basketball was the premier sport, played continually by boys, black and white, from September through May. Pickup games between integrated teams were nothing unusual; in fact, they were the norm when blacks and whites played on the same court. Since team captains (who were always white) wanted winning teams, they selected the best players first, regardless of race. Although race was not completely ignored on the courts, it rarely influenced the conduct of a game. In all the years I played in integrated contests, I never saw a fight provoked for racial reasons.

Although my court skills were average at best, I loved the game and played at every opportunity. In a pickup game in which Bobo and I were on opposing teams we were often matched against one another since we were roughly the same size and age. I relished the chance to play opposite Bobo because he was no quicker or taller than I and couldn't shoot as well. I knew that I could count on a good game against him and that I would score some points—a welcome prospect for one not blessed with athletic prowess.

One fall Saturday afternoon six of us were matched in a hotly contested game, with neither of the equally untalented threesomes able to gain much of an advantage. Howard Lee and I were the only whites in the game. Bobo played on the other team, opposite me as usual.

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The author as a high school student.

We were using Howard Lee's ball, which presented a challenge because it leaked air and had to be inflated every 30 minutes or so. Since there was an air compressor at Granddaddy's store, I was charged with keeping the ball inflated.

We played into the afternoon, interrupted by frequent trips to the air compressor. Some of the other boys, their game halted, would accompany me from the playground to the store. On what turned out to be our last trip, Bobo and Howard strolled along with me as I went to inflate the ball. When we reached the air compressor I pulled from my pocket the required needle and without thinking handed it to Bobo.

The procedure for inserting a needle into a basketball was simple. First, someone wet the needle by sticking it into his mouth or spitting on it. Thus lubricated, the instrument was popped neatly into the small rubber valve through which the ball was inflated. This time, chance dictated that playground procedure would fail; we couldn't fully insert the needle into the valve. Bobo stuck the needle in his mouth, applied the usual lavish amount of saliva, and handed it to Howard Lee, who held the ball. Howard struggled to push the needle into the valve, with no luck. Irritated by what struck me as their incompetence and anxious to return to the game, I decided to inflate the ball myself. I took the ball from Howard, pulled the needle from the valve, and placed it in my mouth, convinced that my spit would somehow get the needle into the ball and us back onto the court.

A split second after placing the needle in my mouth, I was jolted by one of the most shattering emotional experiences of my young life. Instantly an awareness of the shared racial prejudices of generations of white society coursed through every nerve in my body. Bolts of prejudice that I could literally feel sent my head reeling and buckled my knees.

The realization that the needle I held in my mouth had come directly from Bobo's mouth, that it carried Bobo's saliva, transformed my prejudices into a painful experience. I often had drunk from the same cup as black children and dined on food prepared by blacks. It never occurred to me that such actions would violate my racial purity. The needle in my mouth, however, had been purposely drenched with negro spit, and threatened to defile my entire being. Black germs would ravage my body with unspeakable diseases that would rot my limbs. Foreign missions' films, occasionally shown at the Presbyterian church, flashed through my mind. I saw the white jungle doctor, Schweitzer, at Lamborini, dressed in a white linen suit, walking among row on row of rickety cots, each occupied by some wretched, rotting black. Those awful African diseases, I now imagined, would claim me as a victim.

The tainted substance on the needle also threatened my concept of what being white meant. I felt deprived of the ability to reason, to control the situation. My existence as a superior being, the true soul of all southern whites, had been placed in jeopardy. The needle was the carrier of the human degeneracy that black skin represented. It transmitted to me Bobo's black essence and made me feel what I imagined him to be: less than human.

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I felt compelled to jerk the needle from my mouth, to spit it to the ground, and rid myself of the unclean thing. I wanted desperately to wipe my mouth with the back of my hand, to remove with my pure white skin any trace of this defiling substance. The urge to gag, to lean over and vomit the black saliva, was almost unbearable. Yet I could neither gag nor vomit, nor could I wipe my mouth with the back of my hand.

Ironically, the same prejudices that filled me with loathing and disgust also demanded that I conceal my feelings. The rules of segregation demanded that I retain my position as the superior, that I remain in control of the situation. Even more than I feared the poison of Bobo's saliva, I feared the slightest indication of loss of self-control. I reeled from the knowledge that this black child had the power to reach the innermost regions of my being and challenge the sureties of my white world.

Infuriated with myself because I had momentarily allowed a black—even worse, a black my age—to intimidate me, I grabbed the needle from my mouth and slammed it through the valve into the basketball. I jerked the air hose from its rack and inflated the ball to its normal hardness. Still angry, I flung the ball at Bobo, striking him in the stomach. Startled, he clutched the ball with both hands, holding it tightly against his midriff. As he and Howard Lee stared at me, Bobo's eyes filled with anger, Howard's with surprise, each probing to find a resaon for my outburst. No one spoke, and I returned their gaze. Bobo turned, bounced the ball once, hard, caught it, and moved toward the basketball court. He paused and glanced at me again, this time his eyes expressing puzzlement rather than anger.

I had triumphed. I had challenged him in front of another white and forced him to confront my claim to superiority. By refusing to question my actions and returning to the game, he had acquiesced in that claim, though he never acknowledged it. He must have understood that he could not respond to my challenge because of who he was within the village social structure, and because we stood in the shadow of Granddaddy's store, in a white world.

Still, I felt defiled. I had to cleanse myself—to purify my body of Bobo's contaminants and to rid my person of any remaining trace of his negritude. Only then could I fully reclaim my racial purity and restore my shaken sense of superiority. And I had to do so quickly, without the knowledge of others, before I could return to the game.

I walked to the other side of the store and located a faucet, out of sight of the five boys on the basketball court. I cupped my hands beneath the clean, clear water, watched them fill with the crystal liquid, then splashed it on my face, and felt it begin to cleanse me of Bobo's black stain. I filled my mouth with water then forced it through my teeth and onto the ground. I swallowed a large gulp, felt it slide down my throat, and in my mind's eye saw it wash away the last traces of Bobo's blackness. With this baptism of plain tap water I was reborn, my white selfhood restored. I stood straight, shook the water from my face and hands, and walked back to rejoin the game.

I don't remember who won or lost. What I remember is an awareness that things had changed. Bobo's blackness set him apart from me in ways I had never understood. I realized, too, that his blackness threatened me. Segregation was serious, as serious as life and death, perhaps as serious as heaven or hell. I knew that there was something wrong, even sinister, about this power Bobo held over me, this ability to confound my world simply because he was black. None of it made much sense at the time. But this knowledge began to raise questions adults didn't want asked and, as I would later discover, that they never answered. □

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TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

THEY HAVE ANOTHER THAT SAYS, "THEY'RE FOR MY DAD."

The Trojan company is offering a discreet card that you can hand to drug store clerks that says, "May I please have a box of Trojans?"

"SO LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT, MR. CALERO. YOU WANT 10 LARGE PIZZAS WITH PEPPERONI AND A RECEIPT THAT CERTIFIES IT'S FOR NONMILITARY PURPOSES?"

Rep. Carl D. Pursell traveled to Honduras recently to take part in the grand opening of the country's first Domino's Pizza restaurant.

THE HON. JAMES SUPREME COURT JUSTICE WILLIAMS PRESIDED OVER THE CASE.

A former California state senator unsuccessfully petitioned a state court to make "Senator" his first name.

STRICT DECONSTRUCTIONISM

In testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee against Robert Bork, artist Richard Rauschenberg argued that "young, old, rich, and hopeful are united by repulsion that a nouveau changling by his tongue and his unproven change of ideology might entrap decades of innocences."

THE REPORT DECLINED TO ENDORSE EMPLOYMENT QUOTAS, BUT URGED THAT EXTRA PHONE BOOKS BE USED TO OVERCOME A HISTORY OF DISCRIMINATION.

A University of Pittsburgh study covering 1,500 business school graduates indicates that men 5'10" to 6'2" earn $3,600 more annually than shorter colleagues.

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The *Twenty-five* Cent Stamp

Why it's here and why it shouldn't be

by Marianne Szegedy-Maszak

Do you know *your* nine-digit zip code? You know, the snazzy one with the extra four numbers that was supposed to bring your mail service into the 21st century? Well, if it escapes you, don't worry, you're not alone. Most people don't know their nine digits, let alone use them. The U.S. Postal Service has spent $1 billion in the past six years on special nine-digit scanners, a promotional campaign, and big discounts to get business to (please) use the new system. Yet after all that, only 6 percent of outgoing mail has a nine-digit zip code on it.

"Maybe it doesn't have as big a place as we thought five years ago," conceded Postmaster General Preston Tisch in September. Well, what's a billion here and there? As it happens, to the Postal Service, it's nothing new. In the same speech in which Tisch acknowledged that Zip Plus Four hasn't changed our lives, he also admitted that the Postal Service had busted its budget (for the eleventh time in the past 16 years)—this time overshooting its projected $1 million deficit by $244 million. He also said he expected a $400 million gap for 1988.

Citing that huge deficit, Postal Service officials in May sent a new proposal for a postage increase to the Postal Rate Commission for review. If it is approved, as expected, first-class postage will jump 15 percent; the cost of second-, third- and fourth-class mail will rise more than 20 percent. Postal patrons take note: The 25 cent stamp has arrived.

In defending such rate hikes, the Postal Service argues that it is a *business*, by God, and a piece of mail has to pay its own way. But if the U.S. Postal Service was a real business it would have gone belly up years ago. After each financial fiasco, Postal Service managers face no shareholders, no competition and, unlike the old days when Congress directly controlled the postal system, few angry legislators. The Postal Service is probably the only bureaucracy besides the Pentagon allowed to go on a binge and never face the hangover. The Postal Service dwells in a Twilight Zone where it is accountable neither to government nor the market.

Marianne Szegedy-Maszak is a Washington, D.C. Writer.

Lost and mangled

Until 1971, Congress controlled all wage changes, rates, and management and employment levels in the post office. Critics of this system charged that congressmen used their influence to dole out jobs and contracts to supporters. What was needed, they said, was more independence to keep costs down and politics out. After all, the Postal Service employs 806,000 people and spends $30 billion a year. Apart from the Defense Department, no federal entity buys more stuff than the Postal Service. "The Postal Service is the largest tenant, the largest user of trucks, the largest user of uniforms, and the largest user of rubber bands," said David Minton, former chief of staff of both the House and Senate Post Office committees.

In an attempt to make the Post Office more businesslike, reformers created a strange modern hybrid, a quasi-independent government corporation called the United States Postal Service. But the architects of this system forgot one thing: The Postal Service is a monopoly. Without market competition on first-class mail delivery to keep it in check, the Postal Service has distinguished itself with deteriorating service, soaring costs and burgeoning debt.

Officials acknowledge that despite advances in

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communications and transportation, mail delivery is 10 percent slower today than it was 15 years ago. And costs continue to rise. Before reorganization the first-class rate was 6 cents—having risen just 3 cents from 1919 to 1968. Since then, first-class postage has almost quadrupled, despite federal subsidies of $20 billion between 1970 and 1985. If the rate of inflation determined rate hikes, we would be paying 17 cents today for a first-class stamp instead of the proposed 25 cents.

Each new "businesslike" Postmaster General brought to the job a new technique for wasting money. The trend began even before formal reorganization. No doubt you've read the report of the 1968 Presidential Commission on the Postal Service, the one concluding that it needed managers who understood commerce, not politics. A year later, President Nixon chose general contracting mogul Winton Blount as postmaster general. Blount reigned from 1969 to 1971, and is to be congratulated for one of the Postal Services most expensive errors—the $1 billion National Bulk Mail System.

This was intended to make the Postal Service competitive with the United Parcel Service by creating 21 enormous bulk mail centers. But according to a Ralph Nader watchdog group, the system "lost money, slowed delivery, [and] mangled parcels." Even the federal government uses the private United Parcel Service more than it does the Postal Service to mail packages. To be sure, the program had its fans. After he left office, Blount's construction company won $91 million worth of contracts to build four of the centers.

Next up was Elmer T. Klassen, a 40-year veteran of the American Can Company, who took over in 1972. Klassen started slashing—not postage rates or waste, but services and employees. By reducing Saturday window hours, street box collections, and mail deliveries, he cut the postal workforce by 30,000. But some essentials were spared the budget axe. In 1973, he moved the national staff to a new $30 million headquarters in L'Enfant Plaza. And the new frugality didn't keep the Postal Service from awarding big contracts to his friends, in one case giving $815,000 worth of business to the advertising firm of Charles Burnaford, a colleague of his at American Can.

To cool the controversy his policies had generated, Klassen vowed not to raise rates that year. Not until the election was over, that is. A secret White House memo, obtained by Jack Anderson, showed that Klassen deliberately avoided requesting a rate hike during President Nixon's reelection campaign. After the election, the deficit was announced: $438 million, more than double what it had been before Klassen took over a year earlier. The price of a stamp hopped from 8 to 10 cents.

His chosen heir, Benjamin Franklin Bailar, succeeded him three years later, declaring that the only problem with the Postal Service was its failure in "letting the public be aware of the good service they are getting." Over the next three years, Congress poured $2 billion in emergency aid to cover huge budget deficits, and Bailar raised the price of the first-class stamp from 10 cents to 15 cents.

Billy and the jet

Then came the Bolger Boom. Imagine the roaring twenties, bathtub gin and razzle-dazzle musicals, and you will get some idea of the Postal Service's later years under Bolger. Although he was tight-fisted in his early years, particularly with labor, by the 1980s wasteful spending on consultants, elaborate modernization schemes, and executive perks caused the bubble to burst.

It was Bolger who pushed Zip Plus Four without figuring out how to get people to use it. Then there was PRISM. It started out as a simple computer system to help window clerks keep track of receipts. But before long, everyone else wanted in, including dock workers and supervisors in regional centers. The system got so complicated it didn't work and was cancelled this year. Another $50 million down the drain (cheap by Zip Plus Four standards).

Subsequent Bolger brainstorms included Intelpost, an international facsimile service that cost $1 million a year in promotion alone (charged, of course, to other classes of mail). The program's receipts in 1985 totalled $70,000, less than an assistant postmaster's salary. Then came ECOM, an electronic mail service that cost customers 26 cents per message and the Postal Service $2.00. Total loss: $100 million.

How on earth could Bolger keep funding such boondoggles? It was easy. During the Bolger era, the postage stamp went from 15 cents to 22 cents.

You might be wondering just how these enterprises could continue well after a real business would have jettisoned them. Surely the people in L'Enfant Plaza could see something was going wrong, even without the spur of the marketplace. It's "institutional hubris" argues Van Seagraves,

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publisher and editor of *Business Mailers Review*, a trade publication. "The bureaucracy becomes involved and the projects become ends in themselves," he said. "The groups of people pushing PRISM, working with contractors, are . . . a long way away from basic postal service."

While he may have avoided some corporate conventions (like cost accounting) Bolger did adopt at least one key element of private sector management. He got himself a jet, a nice Cessna Citation II, at $1.6 million. Never mind that he announced his hankering for a plane at the same 1983 board of governors meeting where he proposed a 15 percent rate increase.

While Bolger justified the jet as necessary to carry postal officials to those hard to reach rural areas, the Postal Service used it mostly to travel to large cities easily accessible by commercial airlines. Twenty-one of the jet's 150 trips were to New York City alone, according to a congressional report. The plane also flew empty for one leg of 18 different trips and carried only one passenger on 58 trips. The jet, the report said, was "both underutilized and used inappropriately."

Bolger set the stage well for his successor, Paul N. Carlin, who used the jet to fly to New York with his wife at a cost of more than $1,400 for a dinner with *Forbes* magazine executives, according to *The Washington Post*. Carlin was, however, cost-conscious enough to reimburse the Postal Service for his wife's fare—$58. The extra irony here lies in the fact that *Forbes* had long enjoyed special treatment from the Postal Service as a recipient of its Red Tag Service (first class service at second class prices for favored clients). Malcolm Forbes should be all too happy to send his own jet for the postmaster's dining pleasure.

$900 peanuts

Where there's waste and abuse, of course, there must also be fraud. In 1986 the vice chairman of the postal board, Peter E. Voss, pleaded guilty to three felony counts of defrauding the government by helping a Texas-based manufacturer obtain a $250 million contract for new zip code reading machines in exchange for kickbacks. Voss also pleaded guilty to embezzling $43,817 by billing the Postal Service for first-class airline tickets when he actually traveled coach.

To investigate the corruption, the Postal Service asked for help from Joseph Califano's law firm, Dewey Ballantine, which was serving as counsel to the Postal Board of Governors. But there's reason to suspect that the firm might be less than zealous in pushing for postal reform. From January 1985 to April 1987, Dewey Ballantine collected more than $1 million in legal fees from the Postal Service—even though the Service already has more than 100 lawyers.

Then there was John McKean, the accountant who helped Ed Meese, then White House counsel, obtain $60,000 in unsecured loans and was shortly thereafter appointed to the Postal Board. Defending himself and Meese during the attorney general's confirmation hearings, McKean racked up legal fees of $97,773 with—you guessed it—Dewey Ballantine, and got the Postal Service to foot the bill. While having the Postal Service pay his legal bills brought McKean a flurry of publicity, it did not cause him to lose his job. To do that, he had to go a bit further by convincing Bolger to hire a particular California law firm to represent the Service in labor negotiations. The General Accounting Office later charged McKean with using "his position...to influence the postmaster general's award of a contract to a client of his own accounting firm." McKean then resigned.

Dewey Ballantine isn't the only beneficiary of the Postal Service's largesse. In 1985 Postmaster General Albert V. Casey gave John T. Garrity, an old Harvard Business School chum, a $900-a-day, no-bid contract to advise the Postal Service on a reorganization scheme. Although federal agencies are barred from paying consultants more than $263 a day, the Postal Service's unique status enables it to pay whatever someone asks. "His typical rate was $1,000 but we worked it out," Casey explained. "My God, it was peanuts." After picking up $156,000 for seven-and-a-half months' advice, Garrity grabbed a $117,000 no-bid contract in 1986 to evaluate his own recommendations. Nice work if you can get it.

Cooking the books

Wage inflation has also contributed to the increased postal rates. Postal salaries are one-third higher than comparable private sector union wages, according to economists Michael Wachter and Jeffrey Perloff. The Postal Service spends 83 percent of its budget on labor. By contrast, United Parcel Service spends 59 percent of its budget on labor, and Federal Express spends 51 percent. And that's not because their workers are exploited; UPS's 150,000 employees are unionized and some of their Teamster truck drivers earn more than $40,000 a year with overtime.

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Postal wages also outstrip other federal salaries. The starting pay of a clerk or letter carrier is $20,094, plus an annual cost of living adjustment; with wages and benefits the average postal salary is $31,000 annually. While postal wages were roughly comparable to those of other federal workers in 1971, a typical postal service employee now makes $5,500 a year more than a comparable worker in other federal agencies, a gap that will grow to $8,400 under the new contract, according to Postal Rate Commissioner John Crutcher.

How does the Postal Service reduce labor costs if they must pay high salaries? They hire *more* postal workers. Carlin recently gave local postmasters the freedom to hire as many workers as they needed. The Postal Service then grew by 100,000 in less than a year.

Why don't tough management negotiators just slam their fists on the bargaining table and say no to further pay increases? One reason, Crutcher argues, is that management has used pay raises for workers to justify pay raises for themselves. "It is far different in industry and business," Crutcher said. "There, if the manager does a good job in bargaining with unions, that is if he keeps their wages reasonable, he gets a bonus. It's just the opposite in the Postal Service."

And don't forget that wages are the one area in which congressmen, ever mindful of the postal workers in their district (and their PACs), have maintained interest. For example, after Bolger proposed that the Postal Service institute a second, lower wage, Rep. Silvio Conte, the ranking Republican on the House Appropriations Committee, introduced legislation to block the move, quickly undercutting the management bargaining position.

But think of all you get for your money, postal officials say. Did you know that 97 percent of all mail is delivered on time? *Ninety-seven percent?* Postal Service officials explain it like this. The United States is divided into eight postal zones. The postal service calculates the "optimal delivery date" for first- and second-class mail by taking the number of zones a piece of mail must pass through and then subtracting one. If a magazine is dropped off at Zone 1 by 5:30 in the afternoon, it should, in theory, arrive at its destination within Zone 1 the very next day. (*Theory* remember.) If it enters Zone 1 in New York but must travel to Zone 8, California, then it should be there in a week. According to the Postal Service, almost all of the mail arrives by the optimal delivery date.

But the Postal Service has been known to cook the books. Postal investigators recently found that postal workers making "random" mail checks were weeding out late letters from the sample. Clerks who played it straight and thereby showed the Postal Service in a bad light, the investigators found, were confronted by their supervisors. In at least two instances, when honest clerks refused to relent, they were demoted. In Atlanta recently, 11 supervisors were demoted or suspended for tampering with the results; investigators, on the other side of a two-way mirror, filmed them removing stale mail. Small wonder. Postmasters get cash bonuses for good numbers (funded by our rate hikes) and since they know the day before which routes will be sampled, it is easy to encourage good "performance."

25 cents a lick

In filing for their latest rate hike, postal officals have once again invoked the rhetoric of the bottom line. Without the hike, they say, the system will sink $6 billion into debt by October 1988. The mail has to pay for itself, they say.

This is the double standard of the postal service: it has little accountability to Congress *or* to the consumer. Its watchdog, the Board of Governors, to which each president makes a few appointments, essentially rubber stamps the actions of management. (Since reorganization it has never killed a rate hike.) But when catastrophe threatens because of poor planning, the Postal Service turns to Congress and the consumer for another bailout.

Not surprisingly, during moments like this, when the rates goes up, the little guy bears most of the burden. The most recent rate proposal is no exception. In second-class mail, the largest circulation magazines, heavy with advertising, will face about a 10 percent increase. By contrast, small circulation magazines with few ads will suffer increases of more than 20 percent. Where the Postal Service must compete with other services—in overnight mail, for example—the proposed price will actually drop, with the minimum charge falling from $8.35 to $7.74, and the maximum fee tumbling from $104.95 to $70.00. But in first-class mail, where the Postal Service is the only game in town, we'll all start licking 25 cent stamps.

In the world of quasi-independent government entities, that is what's known as business as usual. □

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The rangers' exercise equipment, the environmental lobby, and other woes of our National Parks

Smokey Would Never Believe This

by Alston Chase

If you happened to be driving past Fishing Bridge in Yellowstone Park in July 1986, you might have seen a small band of scruffy protesters, some dressed as grizzly bears, marching across the bridge carrying a sign that read, "Bureaucrats out, grizzlies in." Belonging to a new radical environmental group named Earth First, these people, along with their main-line cousins in such organizations as the Audubon Society and National Wildlife Federation, are convinced that Fishing Bridge, near the outlet of Yellowstone Lake, occupies habitat critical to the survival of the grizzly bear, a threatened species now declining in the park. So they are demanding that all the buildings—visitors' center, general store, service station, recreational vehicle park, everything—be removed so that the land can be given back to the bears.

It does not matter to these people that archeological evidence suggests this place has been a human settlement for 9,000 years, nor that other parts of the park are better bear habitat, nor that eviction of humans from this place would not in itself reverse the grizzly's slow but steady decline. To these people, the issue is more than one of removing a few buildings. Giving Fishing Bridge back to the bears is their way of drawing a line in the sand, stopping the relentless advance of mankind. For many, the Battle of Fishing Bridge would be to our juggernaut civilization what Stalingrad was to Hitler, Tours to the Saracens, Vienna to the Huns: the beginning of the big rollback.

That July, however, the National Park Service was ready for them. They had sent an agent to infiltrate Earth First's planning meeting, and when the group entered the park, they were followed by rangers in an unmarked van who kept in radio contact with park headquarters in Mammoth. At Fishing Bridge they had the water cannon ready. Just the week before, rangers had been put through a crash course on "verbal karate" (to teach them how to respond to jeers from a crowd) and the use of mace—preparations that had cost taxpayers at least $30,000. By the end of the day, 19 protesters had been arrested.

Fishing Bridge remains the symbolic battlefield for the future of the national parks. It raises what many think is the critical issue: are parks for people or for preservation? This dilemma has faced the Park Service since it was created in 1916. The

Alston Chase is the author of Playing God at Yellowstone: The Destruction of America's First National Park. *He is at work on a book about radical environmentalists.*

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enabling legislation stipulated that the new agency should manage the parks in such a way as to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects" but also "leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." But how, many wonder, could parks be preserved while being visited by hordes of people?

Today those who care for the parks seem more divided than ever. Environmentalists argue that parks must be saved from people, while business interests (representing the recreation industry) insist that when push comes to shove, people must come first. Meanwhile Congress is divided and the Park Service vacillates, pushing both development and preservation, often simultaneously. All sides believe they are playing a zero-sum game. For example, environmentalists contend that limiting tourists helps the parks. Conversely, business interests fear that the environmentalist proscription will limit tourists. Thus no Park Service policy seems to satisfy both sides.

The rangers' hot-tub

Environmentalists of all persuasions see overuse as the principal threat to our national parks. The 338 parks and monuments of the National Park system today, they note, receive more than 300 million visitors annually; such burgeoning tourism is destroying what people are coming to see. Saving the parks means saving them from people and this means limiting—and in some cases reducing—human use in these areas. Environmentalists argue that the greatest natural area parks such as Grand Canyon and Yellowstone should remain pristine wilderness, protected as much as possible from human influence.

To concessioners (who provide accommodations and other services to park visitors with the grant from the National Park Service) and others in the recreation industry, parks are for people. Evicting people to save the grizzly bear seems to them to be a perversion of the national park idea. Parks, they believe, are intended to be places where the public can stay in a hotel room with clean towels if they wish and not be forced to sleep on an air mattress or eat freeze-dried chili macaroni.

Don Hummel, makes a case for the concessioners.* Parks are not receiving too much use, he argues. Rather, environmentalists and the Park Service play games with numbers to make it seem so. In fact, he insists, the future of public access to the national parks is in doubt. These two groups are conspiring to close people out.

As a life-long concessioner in Lassan and Glacier national parks, Hummel has axes to grind, but many of his points are on target. While excessive public use does threaten parts of some parks (such as Yosemite Valley and Grand Canyon), visitor numbers are exaggerated. To justify bigger budgets—for everything from traffic control radar to back country patrol—the Park Service juggles statistics on the number of visitors and wildly exaggerates their threat to the parks. Its visitation figures fail to explain why many wildlife species are declining within the national parks even as they are on the rebound elsewhere. The woodstork continues to dwindle in Everglades National Park, for example, even as it is recovering in other parts of Florida; and while beaver and mountain lion are nearly gone from Yellowstone, they are thriving in many other parts of the Rocky Mountain west.

Relations between the National Park Service and the main line environmental community are, as Hummel suggests, increasingly incestuous. The National Park Service, as Ronald A. Foresta, a public lands policy specialist, noted a couple of years ago, continues to move its "base of support away from the park-using public at large and toward the environmental public interest groups." Even under the Reagan administration, a revolving door does exist between these groups, as Interior Department officials routinely leave government to work for environmental groups, and vice versa. This is not to say that all Interior officials go on to join environmental activist groups, but this close relationship, which began in the 1960s when the Park Service enlisted such prominent environmentalists as Ansel Adams,

**Stealing the National Parks: The Destruction of Concessions and Public Access.* Don Hummel, *Free Enterprise Press, $19.95.*

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This kind of park management permits the bureaucrat to escape accountability: ecological decline, when it occurs, can be blamed on God rather than on the Park Service.

Sigurd Olsen, and Starker Leopold, is today an entrenched institution.

Nevertheless, *Stealing the National Parks* is not a very good book. It is written as through it were dictated to a secretary and went to print without revisions, and too much is a stilted autobiographical account of Hummel's own successful career as concessioner. More importantly, Hummel's preoccupation with private concessions leads him to avoid—entirely—the preservation side of the equation. For example, he treats Stephen Mather, the Park Service's first director, as the acme of wisdom and virtue for his advocacy of private concessions. Yet no mention is made that this same director orchestrated a program of predator extermination to permit animals he considered more popular with visitors, such as elk and antelope, to mutiply.

Hummel is wrong, moreover, in suggesting that the Park Service opposes all development in the parks; rather the agency is increasingly hostile to *private* development. If the Park Service were to remove the facilities at Fishing Bridge, it plans to replicate them elsewhere in the park. Last year Yellowstone installed hot-tubs and exercise equipment for its wilderness rangers. And thanks to its ownership of concessions facilities and its new income-sharing arrangement with the Yellowstone concessioner TW Services, Inc., the Park Service now has an economic incentive to promote tourism in that park. Indeed, de facto National Park Service policy is to maximize the numbers of people in the parks (thus justifying maximum appropriations) but keep them on the roads and on the boardwalks and out of the woods and rivers (thus pleasing environmentalists). Unfortunately this policy requires a ranger corps trained in crowd control (what the National Park Service calls "visitor safety and protection") so that our parks are run by policemen rather than ecologists. Such has been the case since 1916 when the Park Service took over management of the parks from the U.S. Cavalry.

Environmentalists, Hummel suggests, are simply mischievous people-haters who have somehow mesmerized the bureaucrats. And while he is partly right—many environmentalists do subscribe to a form of "pure" preservationism that seems a kind of religious misanthropy—both groups also have institutional, bureaucratic reasons to behave as they do.

Cops & the cavalry

Since 1968 national parks classified as natural zones have been run according to a policy sometimes known as "ecosystems management." The idea is that if parks are complete ecosystems, they are "self-regulating" and best managed by letting nature take its course. This has proved a disaster for the simple reason that its premise is wrong: parks are not ecosystems and thus are not self-regulating. Left alone they do not stabilize; rather they die. During the 19 years this policy has been in effect in Yellowstone National Park, for example, the elk and bison herds, lacking natural enemies (the Interior Department earlier removed natural predators such as the indian wolf and mountain lion) have grown in spectacular numbers, destroying the habitat for other species in the process. As a consequence the park has seen a steady decline in big horn sheep, mule deer, beavers, and grizzly and black bears, and a disappearance of critical vegetation.

Nevertheless, ecosystems management fits well with the predilections of the Park Service. Its law enforcement training is just what is required to sustain ecosystems management. Because ecosystems management is in effect no manage-

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ment, little scientific research is necessary. Policing people—keeping them away from the ecosystem— becomes the ranger's primary duty. Parks can accommodate almost any number of visitors as long as they are insulated from "the ecosystem." This kind of management, moreover, is inexpensive, and it permits the bureaucrat to escape accountability: ecological decline, when it occurs, can be blamed on God rather than on the Park Service.

Finally, ecosystems management offers Park Service officials a wonderful rationale for expanding the park system. As no national park today is a complete ecosystem for all the species it contains, this policy can work only when each national park is expanded to its natural "ecosystem boundary."

Environmentalists also are enamoured with ecosystems management, not only because most do have a metaphysical aversion to meddling in nature but also because it fits well with their political agenda. Main-line environmental groups today are small lobbies staffed by professionals—many of whom are lawyers. They focus on what can be accomplished by legislation, and ecological management is not among those things. So they call for restrictions on private land (such as prohibiting industrial or recreational developments) and for the expansion of publicly controlled lands. And ecosystems management is a wonderful rationale for doing this.

The relationship between the Park Service and the environmental community, therefore, is a symbiotic one that is unfortunately destructive to wildlife. Ecosystems management permits the Park Service to spend money on law enforcement rather than on scientific research and encourages a political alliance with environmentalists to expand the park.

Hummel, in short, is half right and half wrong. Visitors per se do not cause the disappearance of Yellowstone's grizzly and black bears. Rather,

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Park Service mismanagement brought this about because it is preoccupied with visitors, pleasing the public, and with the physical protection of park resources. It has evolved as an agency far better equipped to be a good host than to cope with complex ecological problems.

While the future of our parks depends on finding the right balance between preservation and public use, no one is ready to compromise. Yet the need for cooperation in developing a more rational foundation for conservation is greater today than ever. We are coming to the end of the first century of American conservation efforts, a period when the greatest threats were poaching and land exploitation. During this period, emphasis was rightly placed on protection, a task best accomplished through law enforcement and land use legislation. But the nature of the problem today is not only the physical protection of land and animals, but also wise management of them.

Conservation efforts in the second century, therefore, will place a premium on our ability to apply the science of ecology to the task of preserving our remaining wildlands. Unfortunately, our preservation machinery remains geared to solving problems of the past. This machinery—the law enforcement bent of the park service and the lobbying tactics of environmental groups—cannot cope with the diverse biological threats to the national parks.

The political tools available to environmentalists are often inappropriate for solving ecological problems. Politics requires simple issues and quick solutions; but ecological problems are complex and take a long time to identify and remedy. By lobbying, the environmental community can persuade Congress to create new parks and wilderness areas; but management of these areas (each of which has a unique ecology) is delegated to state and federal agencies. Washington-based public interest groups do not have the investigatory resources or scientific expertise to monitor the performance of these agencies. Hence there is a growing gap between the ecologic problems of preservation and the political and management tools with which our society addresses these problems.

Our parks and other wildlife areas are falling between the cracks of an outdated idea, bureaucratic self-interest, environmental extremism, and business shortsightedness. Reasonable environmentalism has all but disappeared; and, before we know it, our parks will too. □

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The right to vote now means safe seats for minority candidates

What Went Wrong With the Voting Rights Act

by Peter H. Schuck

As every middle-aged reader of the *Monthly* will recall, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was swiftly enacted in the wake of the turbulent march on Selma to combat black disenfranchisement in those southern states that had abused literacy tests and other conditions on voting.

The act's success in drawing minorities into electoral activity is unquestionably among the greatest triumphs of modern American politics. Since 1965, black and Hispanic political participation and influence have burgeoned. The number of black elected officials has grown enormously. Black and Hispanic politicians run many of America's largest cities, sit in increasing numbers in Congress and the state legislatures, and occupy influential administrative posts at all levels of government. Hispanics have won gubernatorial races and blacks are poised to do so in some states. Most important, minorities are swing constituencies in many areas still represented by whites; their decisive electoral power has forced segregationist politicians like Strom Thurmond and George Wallace to reverse fervently avowed positions and to court minority political support through patronage, pork, and other concessions. The opposition of virtually all southern Democratic senators to Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court vividly exemplifies their responsiveness to black constituents.

But few may realize that in the years since 1965, the federal courts and the Department of Justice began to implement the act in ways that by 1982 had radically altered its goals and methods. From a guarantee of racial minorities' 15th Amendment right to cast ballots, the act has been turned into a kind of racial quota system for legislators. Federal bureaucrats have invalidated at-large electoral systems, packing minorities into single member districts so that only members of their group can win.

Congress has approved these changes and steadily enlarged the act's scope. Most recently, in 1982, it made voting rights violations easier

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to prove and extended the act's "emergency" provisions, originally slated to expire in 1970, until the year 2007. Although these amendments specified that they were not intended to create proportional representation by race, they have been used to advance that very purpose. Instead of insuring equal political opportunities for minorities, the act is now interpreted to prescribe electoral outcomes, enforced by racial allocations of legislative seats.

This evolution of the Voting Rights Act, Abigail Thernstrom writes in this fascinating study*, is "controversial policy that has somehow stirred no controversy." The long awaited appearance of her book will change all that.

Towards the extreme

The Voting Rights Act was a striking political innovation with immediate, far-reaching effects. Its central provision prohibited any qualification that limited voting rights. But it also adopted three "emergency" provisions that would expire, unless renewed, in five years. One prohibited literacy tests or similiar devices in those jurisdictions where they had been used and where voter registration or turnout in the 1964 presidential election was below 50 percent—southern states. Another authorized the appointment of federal voting examiners in those jurisdictions. The third required local and state governments to obtain Department of Justice "preclearance" of almost all changes in voting rules and procedures.

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Thernstrom's story, written with scrupulous balance and obvious sympathy for the cause of racial justice, reveals numerous ironies. The South's long political oppression of blacks ended up empowering them. States' Rights claims triggered a far more intrusive federal intervention than anything since Reconstruction. The Nixon administration's "southern strategy" to lure southern Democratic voters into the GOP played directly into the hands of the civil rights groups; in order to destigmatize a law that was decidedly regional at inception, the act was extended in 1970 to the entire nation.

"The more potent the legislation became," Thernstrom observes, "the fewer were the objections raised. As the scope of the act was enlarged, the ranks of its opponents thinned." Congressional hearings in 1975 which turned up little evidence of Hispanic disenfranchisement, were used to expand the act to cover Hispanics and other language minorities. In 1982, the most conservative administration in a half century, allied with a Republican-controlled Senate and a reactionary Judiciary Commitee chairman, Strom Thurmond, stood by while Congress adopted amendments that contradicted every ideological principle this alliance stood for. And the administration's civil rights chief, William Bradford Reynolds, vilified by minority group spokesmen for his passionate opposition to extensive affirmative action, implemented the act in ways that reinforced that very remedy and strengthened his critics.

The most important irony, though, was the transformation of the preclearance provision. Originally, preclearance was intended as a temporary adjunct to the ban on literacy tests and similar devices, enabling the Department of Justice (or the federal court in Washington) to insure that southern states covered by the act could not use new subterfuges to circumvent that ban. Under Republican and Democratic administrations alike, preclearance became the act's central regulatory mechanism. Prodded by civil rights groups and incumbent politicians, the Justice Department extended the provision's scope far beyond voting and registration procedures. Municipal annexations, court-ordered

**Whose Vote Counts? Affirmative Action and Minority Voting Rights.* Abigail M. Thernstrom. *Harvard University Press, $25.*

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Packing minorities into a few districts reduces their influence in the much larger number of districts controlled by whites.

redistrictings, multimember districting, at-large voting or majority vote rather than plurality requirements in elections, and other decisions by elected officials cannot go into effect until they are approved by staff attorneys in the Voting Rights Section of Justice's Civil Rights Division. In this way, bureaucratic lawyers are reshaping politics from Opelika, Alabama to New York City.

Thernstrom reveals, with devastating effect, what happened when vast regulatory power was placed at the service of a great but ill-defined ideal. It is not a pretty picture. The department lawyers, she argues, wore ideological blinders. Using high-minded euphemisms to cover their tracks, they defined political equality as requiring "safe legislative seats corresponding to a minority's share of the population." To compensate for low minority turnout and registration, the department has defined a "safe seat as one with 65 percent minority voters and with no strong white candidate." To secure these seats against competition from white candidates, the department has decided that at-large and multimember districting systems must go the way of hoop skirts.

The department's position, Thernstrom maintains, is wrong on two counts. First, it is contrary to the law; the Supreme Court has consistently held that proportional representation is neither the constitutional nor the statutory standard that electoral systems must meet. Second, it is a highly dubious policy. While creating safe seats increases the number of minority office holders, it dissipates minority voter's influence over the process as a whole. Packing minority voters into a few districts that they can safely control relinquishes almost all minority influence in the far larger number of districts now populated almost entirely by whites. Conservative politicians, lacking the moderating influence of a black constituency, feel freer to move toward the political extreme. Single-member districting can breed corrupt, parochial, machine politics as in Chicago and other cities. At the turn of the century, Progressive reformers adopted at-large and multimember systems to force candidates to reach out across ethnic and neighborhood lines, thereby encouraging more public-spirited, integrated politics. Nevertheless, Thernstrom observes, "no amount of argument can persuade the Justice Department that it is legitmate to divide black voters between districts in order to protect a white liberal incumbent who has served that black community well, and who perhaps has seniority on legislative committees that are important to blacks."

Manhattan Republicans

In its 1980 *Bolden* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that constitutional challenges to an electoral system (as distinguished from challenges under the Voting Rights Act) could succeed only upon proof that these systems were adopted or implemented with discriminatory *intent*. Minority challengers thus bore a difficult burden of proof. Many electoral systems had been adopted decades earlier and evidence of the legislators' original purpose was nearly impossible to assemble.

When the Voting Rights Act came up for renewal in 1982, civil rights groups, skillfully mobilized by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, argued that the crucial question was not intent but whether the electoral structure resulted in the dilution of minority votes. Earlier court decisions had based findings of vote dilution upon a combination of factors other than intent, including a history of racial-bloc voting, unresponsiveness to minority concerns, at-large or multimember districting systems, and failure to elect minority group candidates. Relying upon these precedents, the Leadership Conference pressed for an amendment to permit minorities

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to prevail if they could prove discriminatory *results*.

The Leadership Conference sought to convince Congress that its proposed amendment merely restored the pre-*Bolden* standard for constitutional violations and extended it to statutory voting discrimination claims. The difficulty with a results test is the amount of discretion that it confers on the courts and its potential, especially when administered by judges with limited leverage over a complex political process, to degenerate into a race-based numbers game and ultimately into racially proportional representation.

Although there were other remedies for that danger, such as making clear the types of circumstantial evidence that would prove discriminatory intent, the Leadership Conference pressed for an unqualified results test. Its tactic succeeded in the House, where civil rights work horse, Rep. Don Edwards, conducted low-visibility hearings. The fireworks in the Republican-controlled Senate, however, left no doubt that courts might use the new "results" language to strike down *all* electoral systems that impeded proportional representation.

But even there, where conservative southerners controlled the fate of the amendment, the Leadership Conference carried the day. In a demonstration of the act's power, southern senators decided not to offend their large minority constituencies. They desperately sought a compromise, eventually accepting a qualified "results" standard. This "Dole compromise" authorizes courts to premise violations in part on the "extent to which members of a [minority group] have been elected to office," but, in the very next sentence, adopts a proviso that no right to proportional representation is thereby conferred. President Reagan, expressing satisfaction, signed the Janus like amendment into law.

The ink on the Dole compromise had hardly dried before the Court began to enforce the results test by emasculating its proviso. In the most important test of the Dole compromise, a North Carolina case decided last year, the Supreme Court invalidated a redistricting law for failing to insure enough safe black seats.

Thernstrom contends that these interpretations are propelling us down a slippery slope to a politics of explicit race-based entitlements akin to India's caste system. She may well be right. Earlier this year, the Justice Department issued new guidelines that reinforce its gerrymandering strategy. And last year, after Thernstrom's book went to press, the Supreme Court agreed to hear challenges to *party*-based gerrymandering, which can be adjudicated only by applying a proportional representation standard. Manhattan Republicans, it appears, can now go to court to complain of voting rights discrimination.

Real racial justice

To Thernstrom, the courts and the Justice Department have quietly perverted Congress's intent and have abused the judicial and administrative processes. Her account, however, justifies a rather different and in some ways more interesting and disturbing conclusion. Congress amended and extended the act in 1982 with its eyes wide open. Insofar as members ever undertand the complex questions on which they vote, they knew—especially in the Senate, where the issue was clearly drawn—that the department and the courts were using the act to move towards racially proportional representation. Bland euphemisms and high-minded rhetoric may have made it easier for politicians to ignore the reality, but in the end they blessed and even accelerated the law's transformation.

Suppose the original Voting Rights Act had instead been entitled the "Racial Gerrymandering Act," elaborated in the statute's preamble as "An act to authorize bureaucrats and judges to guarantee safe seats to minority candidates." Is it conceivable that Congress would have enacted it or that the Supreme Court would have upheld its constitutionality? To pose the question, of course, is to answer it. It is doubly important, then, to understand the political dynamics that had transformed the act by 1982.

The story that Thernstrom tells, although confined to voting, follows a more general and now familiar political pattern. At a moment of national crisis and moral energy, Congress enacts a regulatory statute to address a pressing but limited problem. As the moment passes, Congress naturally turns to other things. Its statute is then implemented bureaucratically and through case-by-case litigation. New constituencies, more narrowly focused and enduring than the broad coalition that gave birth to it, reshape the law. They mobilize supporters to expand its scope, buffer it against unwanted changes, and promote their own visions of what it ought to accomplish. That is the oft-told story—especially in the *Monthly*—of regulatory programs in areas as disparate as food and drugs, natural gas, and occupational licensing.

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The Voting Rights Act is different only in detail. Its constituency includes civil rights groups seeking visible progress against the legacy of racism; minority candidates seeking protection from the competition of white or other minority politicians; and Justice Department lawyers sympathetic to both kinds of claims and in a position to satisfy them. As Thernstrom notes, few groups have any incentive to protest racial proportionality; those that do can be readily dismissed as racist or self-interested (imputations from which civil rights groups are generally immune). Politicians, especially those with significant minority concentrations in their districts and those seeking liberal support, have everything to gain and nothing to lose from endorsing the certified civil rights position on voting rights.

Indeed, packing minority voters into a few districts is good politics not just for minority candidates but for Republicans and conservative Democrats as well. Draining blacks from white districts, as Thernstrom shows, weakens liberals and moderate candidates and strengthens their opponents on the right. This disadvantage might be outweighed if minority constituents packed into a few districts, represented by persons of their own race, reaped more benefits than if their influence was exerted on a larger number of representatives, black or white. But no one has demonstrated this to be true, and there are reasons to doubt it.

The act's original purposes—to protect minority voters against discriminatory voting tests and to equalize electoral opportunity—were quickly achieved. Even when contrived by federal gerrymanders, the election of minority candidates has probably raised many minority voters' political consciousnesses and carries a symbolic importance essential to democratic politics.

But in the long run, the interests of minority voters, as distinct from those of minority candidates, are probably better served by a different strategy that would return to the act's original vision of equal political opportunity. While thwarting all majority efforts to weaken minority gains, it would reject the kind of "benign" racialism that we increasingly take for granted. Instead, it would encourage a more communal, integrative politics in which the politicians (usually white) who control the larger process must, in their own self-interest, compete for minority votes by taking minority demands seriously. In the end, that form of politics, not a paternalistic policy of electoral apartheid, will be the firmest foundation for enduring racial justice. □

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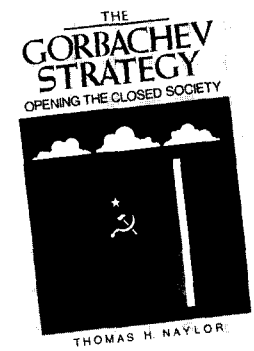

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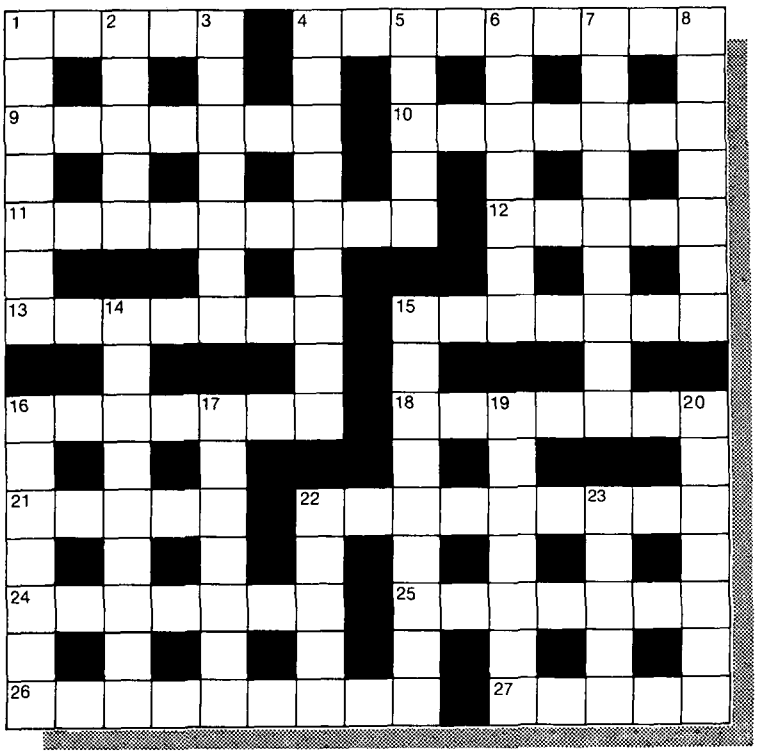
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.



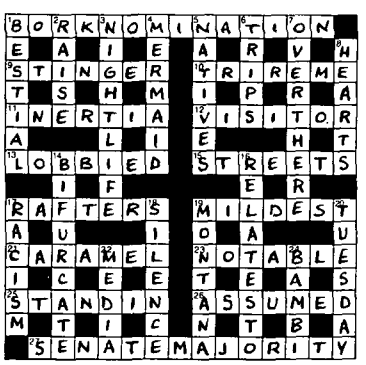
ACROSS

1. Yes, a CIA man can be turned. (5)
4. Ponies run loosely before time for action by 1 Across. (9)
9. Confessed and ran around feeling bad. (7)
10. Organ Anna played around 10:00. (7)
11. Absorbed unusually green sods. (9)
12. Absorbs papyrus we hear. (5)
13. Torturers force Nina to leave the Sandinistas. (7)
15. Air boss forced atmospheric measures. (7)
16. Mercenary strewn in ashes. (7)
18. Bring safety organizations back round Rabat? To the contrary, it's arranged! (7)
21. Lions leaving in early September? (5)
22. Reorganized Mount U., Inc. in quite homogenous. (9)
24. Complete renovation of tar disc. (7)
25. Vulnerable as pinto reared. (2,1,4)
26. Strained tea poor—in undertaking by 27 Across. (9)
27. Point for witness in 1987. (5)

DOWN

1. Carefully recasts wheels for furniture. (7)
2. In the end, arresting is a currrent police operation. (5)
3. Ages lemon and canary, for example. (7)
4. Historic heir wrongly less noted. (6,3)
5. Fabric is tranquil without 100. (5)
6. Stir up a riot on Canadian soil. (7)
7. Recent classic features Allah and 9 deviates. (5,4)
8. Confused as sleep runs out. (7)
14. Sow wild oats and upset said spite. (9)
15. Steep descent is covered by favorable examples of this. (9)
16. Felt desire to pet hood vigorously. (5,2)
17. Summer cooler fanned idea, etc. (4,3)
19. Major island when you get it into your mind. (7)
20. Second fight about light? (7)
22. Decorative plants play start after end of rhetoric. (5)
23. Level at which to find phosphorous in Peru after revolution. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Looking Forward. George Bush with Victor Gold. *Doubleday, $18.95.* There is nothing so galling as a good ghostwriter. Here I was primed for mining some easy humor and cheap invective out of the droll notion of George Bush writing his autobiography just in time for the Iowa caucuses. I envisioned a political version of *Vanna Speaks* replete with helpful hints on how to choose the proper color watchband for a state funeral. Or better yet, a political memoir filled with telling omissions and Freudian undertones. But what I was not prepared for was the competence of former Spiro Agnew speechwriter Vic Gold, who has managed to make Bush's life story half-way interesting without providing much ammunition for either cynical reporters or curious rivals. Perhaps the best thing that can be said for George Bush after reading *Looking Forward* is that the guy does know how to hire decent help.

Still, with a little digging we can find some inadvertent humor in this up-from-Andover saga of Bush's life through 1981, with a nervous eight pages thrown in on the Iran-contra scandal. There is, for example, the gloriously obtuse footnote in which Bush purports to be puzzled by unshakable charges of "preppyism" without mentioning that he did indeed prep at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. Then there is Bush's bold prediction in the book's last chapter (an ersatz question and answer session) that the dominant issue in the 1988 campaign will be "leadership itself and how the various candidates perceive it." Connoisseurs of banal understatement might appreciate Bush's reflections on the loss of two crewmen when his plane was shot down during World War II ("I still don't understand the 'logic' of war—why some survive and others are lost in their prime"). But my favorite is the historical ignorance that prompted free-market, conservative oilman George Bush to name his company after a Mexican revolutionary, because he and his partner had just seen Marlon Brando in *Viva Zapata*.

It is, alas, pretty thin gruel. Little in the book helps us unravel the central mystery of George Bush and his Amazing Resume: how one could have done so much, accomplished so little, and remain so unaffected by the experience? There are moments when one fears that "Doonesbury" has Bush pegged perfectly as the Invisible Man. Take Bush's reaction when he was asked to become the first outsider in history to head the CIA. Does he reflect on the role of good intelligence in the East-West struggle? Does he wonder whether he knows enough to oversee covert operations? Of course not. In a characteristically arid passage, Bush reflects, "After 13 months of duty in China, I liked the idea of administering a worldwide organization, a job that would require 110 percent effort from early morning to late night."

But it is unfair to ridicule the vice-president as totally devoid of principles and beliefs. As Bush reveals in this memoir, he made a courageous stand when he ran into confirmation problems over his nomination as CIA director. Told by GOP supporters that he would have to publicly reject the possibility of serving as Jerry Ford's 1976 running mate to win Senate approval, Bush petulantly refused. "Enough was enough," he writes. "Being at the service of the president was one thing, but catering to partisan demands to be confirmed was asking too much." That incident could be read another way: the only cause that ever prompted Bush to rise above ambition (to be CIA director) was greater ambition (to be Ford's vice president). Even this brief profile in courage was marred when the would-be CIA director agreed to a face-saving compromise in which Ford announced that Bush would not be on the 1976 Republican ticket.

What then are we to make of George Bush on the cusp of achieving that final line of the resume? My guess from reading this memoir is that Bush once knew precisely who he was and what he wanted. Up until his fortieth birthday, Bush concedes, he viewed money "as the ultimate measure of achievement." There is a sincerity about this admission that rings true. But Bush never says precisely what replaced avarice. He talks vaguely about "having passed the age of 40, I'd concluded that there were other important ways to contribute to our children's future." That notion has driven many men into public service. But most of them have had a much clearer vision of what they wanted to accomplish. For George Bush, however, the strategy has always been to get ahead and figure out what to do once he got there. It is an odd and scary reason to seek the presidency.

—Walter Shapiro

Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of a Modern City. Scott L. Bottles. *University of California Press, $25.* This past summer, motorists on the car-clogged freeways of Los Angeles took to shooting each other,

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wounding and occasionally killing fellow commuters. Southern California's fixation on the automobile has always drawn criticism from the national (i.e. eastern) press, but this outbreak seemed to confirm that L.A.'s car culture had gone mad.

Southern Californians are hardly alone in their passion for the automobile. Nationwide, the postwar suburban boom and the more recent growth beyond the suburbs suggest that, for good or ill, most Americans prefer to live in places that can be reached only by car. But Los Angeles has led the way in urban decentralization.

How did it happen? Scott Bottles provides convincing evidence that Los Angeles became a car-oriented city not because of bad planning but in spite of good planning. Far from encouraging use of the automobile, the city's planners spent the early part of the century promoting mass transit and trying to build up Los Angeles's urban core. The city even went so far as to ban downtown parking in 1920. After a huge public outcry, the ban was repealed in less than a month. Angelenos would not be denied their cars.

Mass transit buffs who like to criticize Los Angeles's "love affair with the automobile" usually overlook the fact that it was trolleys and commuter trains, not automobiles, that initially created the city's urban sprawl. Indeed, rail transportation put Los Angeles on the map. The city was a backwater community until the Southern Pacific railroad linked it to the rest of the country in the 1880s. Rather than develop into a traditional "walking city" like Chicago, which grew up just a few decades earlier, Los Angeles used the new rail technology to evolve into a large, decentralized metropolitan area linked by inter-urban train to Long Beach, Pasadena, and other Southern California cities.

Across the country, "streetcar suburbs" were attracting families eager to escape the city. But the cities continued to grow, too, drawing immigrants and farmers. By contrast, Los Angeles's city center lacked the housing that provided a counterweight to the suburban urge in other cities. Streetcar companies took advantage of this situation by purchasing tracts of land far removed from downtown, building houses, and then extending their railway lines to the new developments. Soon Los Angeles had the largest electric railway system in the world.

Why did this mass transit system disappear? Bottles lays most of the blame on the inefficiency of the trains and trolleys. Riders complained of overcrowding but at the same time demanded that fares be kept down. Mass transit just couldn't compete with the pleasure of driving your own automobile. In fact, the electric train tracks got in the way. Streetcar companies made one last attempt to boost their fortunes in the 1920s with a plan to build elevated tracks, but the *Los Angeles Times* crusaded against them, decrying "their darkening shadows and their depressive gloom," and the proposal was defeated at the polls. By the 1940s, city planners were ready to throw in the towel. They started building freeways.

Bottles fails to explore the deeper issues raised by Los Angeles's inexorable sprawl, the most serious being the isolation of social classes. As other metropolitan areas follow Los Angeles's lead, class barriers around the country seem certain to harden. On a more prosaic level, Bottles does make a persuasive case that Metro Rail, a multi-billion dollar subway currently being dug beneath the city, will fail, and not just because it will serve too few people. Southern Californians have become hooked on the freedom and convenience of the automobile. It will take more than snipers to break the habit.

—Timothy Noah

Abortion and Divorce in Western Law. Mary Ann Glendon. *Harvard University Press, $25.* Americans tend to think of abortion as a black-and-white issue. Protest groups, like Right to Life and NOW, fight over whether it should be legal or illegal. But as Glendon shows in this short but enlightening book, the issue is not nearly so divisive in Europe, where most nations have no idea why we're still shouting.

For Glendon, a Harvard law professor, the key difference is *how* abortion laws are formed. While the U.S. has put major abortion decisions in the hands of the judiciary, European countries have left them to their legislatures. When courts create upheaval, she argues, citizens are more likely to become angry, feeling that the law is imposed on them and that major decisions have been taken out of their hands. By contrast, laws passed by legislatures, while often unpopular, are nevertheless more likely to be shaped by public opinion and thus more widely accepted.

The laws the Europeans have come up with are designed to navigate a middle ground. While the U.S. has the least restrictive abortion laws in the West, most European countries require a brief waiting period before granting approval and put a limit on abortions after ten weeks. What's more, they spend much more on family planning, to prevent unwanted pregnancies in the first place, and generously support child care programs to make raising children an attractive alternative to terminating pregnancies.

Another small but telling difference is that in Europe, abortions are discreetly administered in state-owned hospitals. Only the U.S. has a profit-making abortion industry that advertises in newspapers and at bus stops.

Glendon acknowledges that the U.S. tradition of privacy and individualism is probably too strong for a simple consensus to develop here the way it did in, say, Sweden. In her analysis of the American difference, however, she fails to acknowledge an even more significant factor hindering an abortion compromise. Religiously, ethnically, and culturally, we're just too diverse to easily reconcile this issue. And "turning it back to the states" is no panacea. Even if Berkeley and Birmingham were allowed to have abortion laws reflecting their different community standards, it's hard to believe that the right-to-life movement would be

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content to see thousands of abortions performed anywhere in the country. Similarly, it's hard to imagine feminist groups ever being content to see women—in any part of the country—jailed for obtaining an abortion. Whether or not the Rehnquist court, as influenced by Reagan appointments, overturns *Roe v. Wade*, there will be no easy compromise.

—*C. Blair Palese*

Pravda: Inside the Soviet News Machine. Angus Roxburgh. *George Braziller, $19.95.* In this scholarly study, Roxburgh puts aside Western rhetoric and portrays *Pravda* not as a masterful manipulator of information and disinformation, but as sometimes pathetic, and often comic.

The paper's problems start with its prose. The internal affairs and "Party Life" departments are so overwhelmingly dull only the active party members and, ironically, American Kremlinologists read them. Sure, plenty of American papers are dull and boring, but *Pravda* takes it one step further by combining its somnolent story topics with obsolete words and convoluted Russian grammar. A full 85 percent of its readership, according to a "secret survey," doesn't understand *Pravda* at all.

What sections of *Pravda* do Russians like? Foreign news, even though it extensively borrows and twists clippings from Western newspapers, is the unqualified favorite. By filling the section with these clippings, *Pravda* tries to give its propaganda a "stamp of approval" from the western media. In 1983, for example, when the shooting down of KAL 007 elicited a virtually unified condemnation from the west, the Soviets managed to piece together enough selections of western coverage that they convincingly corroborated their version of the incident. Roxburgh, however, does not interpret the public's interest in the foreign news page as approval but as evidence of its thirst for information about the West.

After foreign news, readers most enjoy the crime reports. Written like two-minute mysteries, they detail the exploits of Soviet antiheroes who take on the system and, of course, lose. Even deadly serious punishments are treated lightly. One report explained that an offender was sentenced to time "in places with an unfavorable climate."

Roxburgh does not, however, completely dismiss *Pravda* as harmless. Certain attitudes, such as anti-Israeli sentiment and distrust of the West, may have been built up by the newspaper. But the roots of these attitudes lie in long-standing Russian traditions and patriotism, which the propaganda merely reinforces.

—*Jonathan Frankel*

The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925. David Montgomery. *Cambridge University Press, $27.95.* Montgomery's study of labor is social history at its best. A former machinist himself, Montgomery, now a history professor at Yale, has amazing agility in moving from a shop-level focus to a panorama of the entire American system.

Most interesting is his explanation of what we today would call "workplace democracy." Before the depression of the 1880s and the Homestead strike of 1892, workers usually exerted tremendous control over the production process, often imposing strict work rules on themselves. An 1891 convention of the Amalgamated Association in the steel industry, for example, ordered locals to ban overtime when people were out of work, cut out workers who were negotiating separate deals with management, and reduce the amount of iron that could be produced per person. As one chapter title suggests, the workplace was dominated by the "manager's brain under the workman's cap." Workers felt they were running their own enterprises. The idea that an owner should enjoy total control over labor seemed downright odd.

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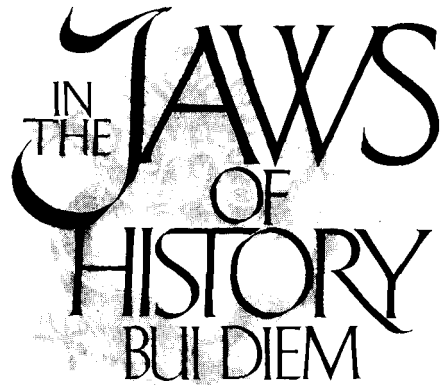

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The loss of these values, "the fall of labor," came as management began using sophisticated systems of shop-floor control that ended the workers' monopoly on knowledge of the production process. "Taylorism," pioneered by Frederick Winslow Taylor, author of *Principles of Scientific Management*, involved breaking down jobs into minute parts. At the same time, the increasing use of machinery and technology accelerated the loss of control; court rulings helped codify the notion that management could exclude labor from key decisions; and the hostile policies of Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover, along with fluctuations in the business cycle, weakened labor's bargaining position. Finally the unions became divided over whether to push comfort or control of the process.

In a sense, Montgomery's lament about labor's fall is ironic. Rising membership and New Deal legislation created a period of unprecedented prosperity for workers after World War II. But Montgomery shows that workers' high wages ended up being part of a Faustian bargain. Prosperity, as usual, turned out to be fragile, and the workers had lost control over their own destiny.

—*Charles Euchner*

If I Had a Hammer. . . .The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left. Maurice Isserman. *Basic, $18.95*. The fifties were a tough decade for the left in America. In the popular mind, socialism and communism were two words for the same evil. To be a radical was to know penury; it was to be hated and despised. In 1952, the treasurer of perhaps the most important group of pacifist activists in America reported that the organization had $12.84 in its bank account. Three years later, when its leader A.J. Muste participated in the first modest act of collective disobedience in the fifties, he and his comrades were promptly arrested. Their crime? Gathering in a park outside New York's City Hall and refusing to take shelter when the air-raid sirens sounded. At their trial, the judge called these self-styled pacifists "murderers," on the grounds that their disdain for civil defense would mean the death of millions of New Yorkers in the event of a genuine nuclear attack.

Still, the fact is that a radical American sub-culture did survive the big chill of the fifties to influence the young activists of the sixties. As Maurice Isserman shows in this scholarly and lucid study, the recent history of American radicalism is "less spasmodic" than is generally supposed.

Isserman, a professor at Smith, is best known for *Which Side Were You On?*, a history of the Communist party during World War II. Although his new book begins with a chapter on the collapse of the American Communist party, its chief interest lies in the detailed accounts he gives of three more obscure groups: the activists who swore allegiance to Max Shachtman, the intellectuals associated with Irving Howe and his small journal, *Dissent*, and the radical pacifists linked to A.J. Muste.

The strangest story in many respects is that of Shachtman. A Jewish immigrant born in Warsaw in 1904, Shachtman was a communist in the twenties, a follower of Trotsky in the thirties, and—after he broke with his mentor in 1939—the leader of an independent and increasingly esoteric Marxist sect that has left a surprisingly large mark on American political life. Shachtman recruited Irving Howe and Michael Harrington, among others, into the socialist movement (both eventually broke with him). He also, at different times, struck up alliances with Norman Thomas and George Meany. Cunning, narrow-minded, and ferociously anti-Stalinist, Shachtman turned out several generations of seasoned political cadres with a militantly Manichean view of the world. In the late fifties, he began to drift slowly to the right, eventually harnessing his Marxist faith in the working class and his Trotskyite hatred of "bureaucratic collectivism" to the Cold War anticommunism of the AFL-CIO. Today, some of his former disciples support Ronald Reagan.

In the final chapter of his book, Isserman offers a brief account of how the New Left arose from the ashes of the Old Left. This account is not entirely satisfactory, largely because his emphasis on the Old Left leads Isserman to downplay the importance of the black civil-rights movement, of an increasingly rebellious youth culture, and of maverick liberals and iconoclastic intellectuals like C. Wright Mills. Besides, as Isserman points out, the arid scholasticism of the Old Left sectarians left most young activists cold. That was one reason the New Left chose from the start to ignore the long-standing sectarian debates over the meaning of the Russian Revolution. Ironically, in the late sixties, students inadvertantly mimicked the old sectarian struggles with their own competing chants of "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh" and "Mao, Mao, Mao Tse-Tung."

Despite its limitations, Isserman's book is an invaluable historical resource. It is also useful reading for all would-be activists, if only as a collection of the kind of cautionary tales that, to judge by the perennially self-destructive behavior of the beleaguered American left, cannot be told too frequently.

—*Jim Miller*

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